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Available at: <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/archive/00000577>

Citation as published:

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The Ottoman Empire in Recent International Politics – II: The Case of Kosovo

ALTHOUGH THE SUBTERFUGE of citing and manipulating history to reach a political goal occurs worldwide, the first part of this article pointed to its regular occurrence across territories once part of the Ottoman Empire. Public support for controversial actions has tended to grow in these successor states whenever politicians have linked their goals to ‘national’ versions of Ottoman history which present the nation as an enduring corporate entity that suffered centuries of oppression under ‘Turkish’ imperial rule. These histories, some of which date to the nineteenth century, the golden age of romantic nationalism, continue to be used consciously by post-Ottoman regimes to craft a sense of national identity defined as the antithesis of everything ‘Turkish’. Rhetorical references to national misfortunes suffered under the Ottomans nurture resentment of past injustices, mobilize support for extreme positions, and silence debate about present-day political choices.

Examples of such practices are found during the wars of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, Bulgaria’s forced assimilation of its Turkish minority in the 1980s, the Cyprus dispute, the question of Palestine, and Turkey’s contentious candidacy for membership in the European Union, contested by proxy through calls for Turkey to acknowledge ‘the Armenian genocide’ of the First World War. Part I of this article shows that the national histories exploited by politicians and their followers rest upon misunderstanding of the Ottoman state and its social structure.¹ This article examines the Serbian claim to exclusive historical rights in Kosovo. The kind of history invoked in this case differs from that outlined in Part I, in which the Ottoman state is portrayed as decadent, a hollow shell of its former self, no longer able to enforce submission or to prevent partition by foreign states. In dispute in Kosovo are the intentions and actions of the Ottomans themselves while the Ottoman Empire was one of Europe’s great powers. The idea of Kosovo is intertwined with modern Serbia’s national identity, moreover, which makes communal inherited memory (based on fact or

¹ F. F. Anscombe, ‘The Ottoman Empire in Recent International Politics – I: The Case of Kuwait’, *International History Review*, xxviii (2006), 537-59.

experience) difficult to distinguish from taught memory (story rather than history).

* * * * *

KOSOVO, LIKE OTHER theatres in the wars of Yugoslavia's disintegration, provides a fitting example of extreme politics infused with history. Although factors ranging from economic crisis to the ambitions of the president of the republic of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, may have contributed to Yugoslavia's collapse, there is no doubt that the inter-ethnic hostilities expressed competing senses of historical grievance. Everyday idiom cast the conflicts as Croatian 'Ustasha' fighting Serbian 'Chetniks' fighting Bosnian 'Turks'.¹ And as was commonly said in Yugoslavia after 1989, as the state collapsed into war, 'everything started with Kosovo.' While the phrase referred to the ethnic tensions there in the 1980s, it also encapsulates the role of Kosovo as the bedrock of Serbian nationalism.

According to the standards by which most governments gauge state interests, Kosovo should not matter much to Serbia: small, with few economic prospects apart from mineral deposits along its northern edge, and strategically a dead end, its terrain difficult and costly to control. Its Albanian inhabitants were estimated in 1990 to outnumber Serbs by roughly nine to one, with other ethnic groups forming a small part of the population. In recognition of the preponderance of Albanians, Kosovo became an autonomous province within the republic of Serbia under the Yugoslav constitution of 1974. Following the death in 1980 of Josip Tito, the president and guiding hand of post-1945 federal Yugoslavia, many Kosovar Albanians began to agitate for the elevation of Kosovo to a republic within the federation. Rather than cutting loose its poorest, most troublesome province, Serbia reacted by tightening control. Inter-ethnic tensions increased until Serbia, with Milošević as president of the republic, unilaterally terminated Kosovo's autonomy in March 1989. Alarmed by such signs of resurgent Serbian nationalism, Croatia and Slovenia moved towards secession from Yugoslavia, and declared independence in June 1991, which triggered war.

While the conflict between Serbs and Albanians in the 1980s precipitated the break-up of federal Yugoslavia, each side was driven by historical grievance. Albanians harboured memories of harsh treatment by Serbian troops and police in the nineteenth century, the Balkan Wars (1912-13),

¹ The Ustasha ran a fascist regime in Croatia during the Second World War that, according to Serbian national history, murdered 600,000 Serbs. The Chetniks were the Serbian royalist resistance to the Axis occupation, reviled in non-Serbian national histories both for their wartime actions and for aiming to bring back the monarchy-autocracy that had run pre-war Yugoslavia largely for the benefit of Serbs. Naming the Bosnian Muslims 'Turks' linked them with the oppression Christian south Slav nations' standard histories claimed pervaded the Ottoman period.

and between the world wars. Many had memories derived from personal experience, not just history and propaganda, because Tito's interior minister, Aleksandar Ranković, had heavy-handedly repressed the Albanians from 1945 until his downfall in 1966. Kosovo's recognition as an autonomous province of Serbia may be seen as recompense for Ranković's harshness. In addition to repression, Serbian campaigns against Kosovo's Albanians included bouts of 'ethnic cleansing' and attempts to compel them to emigrate, most often to Turkey.¹

The Serbians' choice of Turkey as a destination for Kosovo's Albanians derived partly from the importance of Kosovo to Serbian national consciousness, itself deriving from the conflict there with the Ottomans: the defeat at the battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, in which King Lazar of Serbia died while fighting Sultan Murad I, remains the defining moment in Serbian national history. This history also avers that the Orthodox church, headed by the patriarch of Peć in western Kosovo, preserved the Serbian identity for the nation during the centuries of Ottoman rule. The ties that bind the Serbian Orthodox church to Serbian nationalism also derive from a second incident during the Ottoman phase of Serbian national history, the 'great migration'. Having forced the patriarch and much of the Serbian population of Kosovo to flee to Hungary in 1690, the Ottomans, supposedly, replaced the departed Serbs with Albanians. The steps taken to try to coerce Albanians to emigrate to Turkey were an attempt to erase the perceived legacy of Ottoman domination by sending back Muslims to the people who had brought them three hundred years earlier.

This history of confrontation has instilled a sense of grievance that was, and is, felt strongly by many Serbs, even though none can have personal experience of such distant events. Milošević proved his shrewdness when he chanced his political fortunes on the sense of national grievance. While still a second-tier leader of the Communist Party in Serbia, in April 1987 he seized the opportunity, at a rally by Kosovo's Serbs in protest against Albanian intimidation, to cast himself in the role of champion of the Serbian nation. He had become president of the federal republic of Serbia by the time he made a similar speech in June 1989 to mark the six-hundredth anniversary of the battle of Kosovo Polje. Alluding to popular memory of long centuries of Muslim oppression, epitomized by the battle and 'the great migration', Milošević promised his audience that Serbs, particularly those living in Kosovo, their once and future heartland, should not again have to live in fear. The speech, aired repeatedly by radio and television in Serbia, completed Milošević's rapid transition from colourless party

¹ N. Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York, 1999); M. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York, 1998).

official to leader of a mobilized, revanchist nation. Yugoslavia disintegrated when Serbia, its largest nation, exchanged federalism for zealous nationalism; the bloody conflicts with other ethnic groups resulted from the avowals by nationalist leaders such as Milošević that the enduring oppression of Serbs had to be ended. At the root of the conflicts lay the myths of Kosovo.

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HISTORY AS A tool of modern political ideology has hardly been a Serbian monopoly; each nation in Yugoslavia (including the 'Yugoslav' nationality chosen by some in censuses) gained strength from idealized history. Even if some Serbian historians have not promoted a consciously nationalistic view, history as practised in Serbia has observed the constraints imposed by state-sponsored nationalism. As suggested in Part I, nation-building states in former Ottoman territories have used their influence over education, support for and dissemination of research, and the media to draw implicit, and sometimes explicit, boundaries for acceptable historical interpretation.¹ Minor variations on the established narrative may be allowed, but even less overtly ideological historians remain chroniclers of the nation. As in most other post-Ottoman states, few historians in Serbia are able to read Ottoman texts: the focus of their research is confined to Serbs and Serbian lands under 'the Turks'. In the 1980s and 1990s, overtly nationalist Serbian scholars such as Dušan Bataković received the most generous support for the publication of their work.² The focus of much of such nationalist history was Kosovo.

Serbian nationalism draws its strength and passion from tales of Kosovo. The region is the setting for a well-developed mytho-history suffused with heroism in the face of injustice, tales that lend themselves to aggressive policies because they carry both a sense of Serbian historical grievance against near neighbours and an implicit programme of action to redeem past injustices. The foundation of the nationalist construction is the battle of Kosovo Polje.

Because the tale of the battle is so well known, it has attracted repeated

¹ On the further tightening of permissible thought and speech during the Milošević period, see N. Popov, 'The University in an Ideological Shell' and S. Milivojević, 'The Nationalization of Everyday Life', in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, ed. N. Popov (Budapest and New York, 2000), pp. 303-26, 608-29. On the Serbian intelligentsia's willingness to push the nationalist view, see J. Dragović-Soso, 'Saviours of the Nation': *Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism* (London, 2002), esp. chs. 2-3.

² Bataković wrote a series of nationalist works on Kosovo, of which several (*The Kosovo Chronicles* [Belgrade, 1992] and *Kosovo, la spirale de la haine* [Paris, 1993]) have been translated into other languages. Many similar works have not been translated: e.g., *Kosovo i Metohija u srpskoj istoriji*, ed. R. Samardžić (Belgrade, 1989); D. Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu* (Belgrade, 1985); and A. Urošević, *Etnički procesi na Kosovu tokom turske vladavine* (Belgrade, 1987).

critical scrutiny and is largely discredited as anything but myth. Few facts about it can be verified. It was large scale and bloody, but was not fought between ethnic armies of Serbs and Turks: the combatants were drawn from many of the wide variety of population groups who inhabited the Balkans and Anatolia. The battle ended in a draw, with both Lazar and Murad dead. Whereas Murad's successor, Bayezid I, withdrew to consolidate his hold on power, the kingdom of Serbia, already weak and in political disarray since the death of King Stefan Dušan in 1355, remained fragmented after Lazar's death, owing to persistent rivalries among the leading nobles. Even so, not until 1459 were all of their lands incorporated into the Ottoman Empire (Belgrade remained in Hungarian hands until 1521). So much is verifiable; the key elements of Serbian nationalism are later embellishments, the stuff of millenarian myth.

Serbian millenarianism was perhaps inevitable, given the religious message permeating the mythologized accounts of the battle. These state that the battle brought the Serbs under the 'Turkish yoke' because Lazar chose a heavenly realm over the preservation of his earthly kingdom. Lazar having made his choice, God allowed treachery within Serb ranks. One of the key nobles, Vuk Branković, turned traitor, and the battle was lost. Unlike Lazar, who suffered an earthly death in battle, Murad was slain through the self-sacrificing heroism of a lone warrior, Miloš Kobilić (Obilić). Of these elements, however, only the explicitly religious element, the choice of the heavenly over the earthly kingdom, is of early vintage.¹

The Orthodox church helped to shape the myth and acted as its protector throughout the Ottoman period. Lazar, an important benefactor of the Serbian church, had endowed the monastery at Ravanica, where he was buried. When Serbian Orthodox priests wrote the earliest commemorations of him, they stressed his piety and began his transformation into a Christ-like figure who suffered martyrdom so that other Christians might escape the clutches of the heathen Turk. Even after the Serbian Orthodox lands fell under Ottoman control, the church found the story useful in providing an example of a king who remained true to his faith by trusting in the 'heavenly kingdom' after death rather than submit to the infidel. Such a message helped to discourage conversion to Islam, a problem of continuous concern to the church. The story of Lazar closely resembled the 'neo-martyrologies' compiled by church figures to encourage the Orthodox to stay true to Christianity.

Implicit in these tales is the millenarian idea, common among the

¹ For the Kosovo legend and other tales bound up in Serbian nationalism, see A. Greenawalt, 'Kosovo Myths: Karadžić, Njegoš, and the Transformation of Serb Memory', *Spaces of Identity*, iii (2001), 49-65.

Orthodox in the Ottoman Balkans, that those who remain faithful under duress will be redeemed: that on the Day of Judgement they, too, will be rewarded by admission to the kingdom of heaven.¹ The idea of redemption transfers easily from the inhabitants of the land to the land itself: if God delivers the souls of the faithful from torment, then surely He will deliver from the infidel the land on which Lazar proved his faith. The New Testament idea of God's grant of salvation to the faithful is linked to the Old Testament notion that God promised the land to his chosen people. Or, to adapt another biblical phrase, the Serbs (through the sacrifice of their king) gave, and they expected to receive.

Expectations of the redemption of Kosovo for Serbs could be expected to heighten at times matching Christians' millenarian expectations, particularly at the end of a century or millennium. Milošević's inflammatory speech in 1989, now recognized as a turning point on the road to Yugoslavia's destruction, was delivered at just such a moment: the sixth centenary of the battle. Expectations were heightened by the Serbian church's repatriation of Lazar's remains from Belgrade (where they had been reburied during the Second World War) to Ravanica shortly before the speech, following a two-year 'tour' of Serbia's monasteries. A crowd of perhaps one million Serbs came to Kosovo Polje to mark the occasion. Milošević electrified them because his message perfectly fit the occasion.

Given the link between the Lazar tale and the Orthodox church, it seems natural that the second element of the nationalist Kosovo myth should tie the church to the well-being of the nation.² Even scholars not obviously sympathetic to Serbian national history commonly state that the church, in particular the patriarchate of Peć, was the only surviving 'Serb national institution' and therefore a key to the 'preservation' of Serbian identity during the Ottoman period.³ This is a more interesting notion than the legend of Lazar and Kosovo, because less of the church's purported role as guardian of Serbdom is obviously fable than is the case with the battle of Kosovo Polje.

The assertion that the Orthodox church or the patriarchate of Peć 'kept alive' the Serbs' sense of national identity should be treated with caution, nonetheless, because it is difficult to reconcile with what is known about state, church, and society in the Ottoman period. One has only to

¹ On Orthodox millenarianism, see most recently V. Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans* (Westport, 2001), pp. 52-6.

² On the church and recent nationalism, see R. Radić, 'The Church in the "Serbian Question"', in *Road to War*, ed. Popov, pp. 247-73.

³ B. Magas, 'The Curse of Kosovo', *New Internationalist* (Sept. 1993), available at <http://www.newint.org/issue247/curse.htm>; G. Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (New York, 2000), p. 176 n. 1.

remember that Romanian, Bulgarian, and even Greek national identity blossomed in the same nineteenth-century milieu as the Serbian, in spite of the absence of earlier 'national' churches devoted to preserving anti-Ottoman ethnic consciousness. The Orthodox patriarchate of Constantinople, apparently the pinnacle of ethnic 'Greek' society, abhorred agitators almost as thoroughly as did the government; the execution of Patriarch Grigorios V at the outbreak of the Greek revolt in 1821 seems particularly unjust given his denunciation of it.¹

Tension between church hierarchy and secular nationalism during the Ottoman period can be seen also in the Serbian case; in the early nineteenth-century church, authorities struggled against Vuk Karadžić and others who wished to craft a standard literary language freed from the imprint of liturgical Church Slavonic.² The issue of language complicates the notion that the Peć-led hierarchy promoted 'Serbian' consciousness, because the language of the liturgy, Church Slavonic, was an antiquated Slavic shared with Orthodox communities living in areas now part of Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia. The language, aided in part by Ottoman state support for the Orthodox hierarchy, forged a non-national Orthodox ecumene in the Ottoman period.³ While the gap between liturgy and vernacular might not match that between Latin and the Romance dialects of early modern Europe, the parallel with Catholic Europe ought to be remembered whenever a 'national' church is claimed to have 'preserved' a secular identity during the Ottoman period.⁴

1 Roudometof, *Nationalism*, pp. 61, 64-5. On the early Ottoman patriarchate's disinterest in any identity, especially ethnic, other than Orthodox Christian, see E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1993), p. 71.

2 On colloquial versus church languages, see T. Butler, 'Jernej Kopitar's Role in the Serbian Language Controversy', *Slavic and East European Journal*, xiii (1969), 479-88. For the role of Church Slavonic, see R. Picchio, 'Church Slavonic', in *The Slavic Literary Languages: Formation and Development*, ed. A. Schenker and E. Stankiewicz (New Haven, and Columbus, OH, 1980), pp. 1-33.

3 G. Castellan, *Histoire des Balkans (XIVe-XXe siècle)* (Paris, 1991), pp. 145-6; M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York, 1997), p. 179. For Orthodox culture in the pre-national Ottoman period, see P. Kitromilides, 'Orthodox Culture and Collective Identity in the Ottoman Balkans during the Eighteenth Century', *Oriente Moderno*, xviii (1999), 131-45; R. Clogg, 'The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire', in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. B. Lewis and B. Braude (New York, 1982), i. 185-207. Daniel Goffman notes that the Ottoman Sultan, by giving significant secular responsibility for the Orthodox population to the patriarch, increased the patriarch's authority beyond its level under Byzantium: D. Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 171.

4 The choice of 'dialects' rather than 'languages' is meant to remind readers that there were no standardized languages spoken at the 'national' level in Europe prior to the nineteenth, or even twentieth, century. Before the nineteenth century in France, for example, Latin might not have been understood by most parishioners in Pays d'Oc, but French (based on the dialect of Île de France) would not have been much more comprehensible. The Balkans had no more linguistic clarity or unity than other parts of Europe, and the gap between liturgical language and local dialect was no more an issue than in Catholic lands. It was only in 1762 that Paisii Hilendarski, a Slavic monk disgruntled over the growing dominance of Greek within the church, composed his Slavo-Bulgarian history to urge

Scepticism is also warranted when frescoes of canonized temporal leaders are cited as evidence for the church's role in nurturing the ideal of nationhood. Under the pre-Ottoman Serbian archbishopric-patriarchate (1219-1459/63), Orthodox churches and monasteries were decorated with frescoes of canonized patrons, rulers, and nobles from the Nemanjids (r. 1168-1371) to Lazar, which the Ottoman regime allowed them to retain. The frescoes were not meant to reinforce a sense of ethnic solidarity, however: they stressed the piety of the subjects, rather than carrying a political message, let alone implying that dead nobles commemorated on walls shared anything other than piety and faith with live peasants in congregations. An openly subversive political message such as the promotion of Serbian national solidarity would not have been tolerated by the Ottoman state or by the Orthodox hierarchy, which understood that it had nothing to gain, and much to lose, from fostering subversion. The majority of Orthodox national churches in the modern Balkans were created in the nineteenth century in opposition to, and against the wishes of, the established church of the Ottoman Empire.¹ The anti-Ottoman churches in Serbia, Greece, and Romania owed their existence to the newly emerging states, to which they looked for aid and protection; in return, they supported the regimes and the national ideal. The Bulgarian Exarchate varied from the pattern: its foundation in 1870 had the approval of the Ottoman government, which was not threatened by the anti-Greek nature of Bulgarian Orthodoxy.

Serbian history makes much of the fact that the re-establishment of the patriarchate of Peć in 1557 was attributable to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, by origin an Orthodox Christian from Bosnia (and thus claimed as a member of the nation in Serbian history), and grand vizier late in the reign of Sultan Süleyman I ('The Magnificent') and early in that of his successor, Selim II. One of Mehmed's relatives became the first patriarch. While Mehmed's

resistance to the Graecophone trend, a call met by general indifference among Bulgarians until the nineteenth century. The case of Paisii bears striking similarity to early German nationalist diatribes against the French, launched by educated Germans squeezed out of state employment by German princes' preference for relying upon French advisers in the late eighteenth century: P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 30-1; Clogg, 'Greek Millef', pp. 188-9; Kedourie, *Nationalism*, pp. 52-3.

¹ M. Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York, 2000), pp. 74-6. For examples of the widespread modern assumption that the church harboured national identities in the Ottoman period, see *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. P. Ramet (Durham, NC, 1984), chs. 9-11. On the anachronism of such assumptions, see P. Kitromilides, "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans", in P. Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe* (Aldershot, 1994); P. Kitromilides, 'In the Pre-Modern Balkans ... : Loyalties, Identities, Anachronisms', in *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions, and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment*, ed. D. Tziouvas (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 19-29.

action suggests that he recognized his heritage and the needs of his fellow Serbs, other reasons for his intervention on behalf of Christians are more plausible.

The Ottomans' treatment of the Orthodox church arose from their need to manage their Orthodox Christian subjects, who were in the majority until the addition of the Arab provinces in the sixteenth century. Until the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the patriarch in Constantinople was a rival to the Sultan, whose political interest lay in weakening the church hierarchy. After the fall of Constantinople, the Ottomans reversed course: they buttressed the church's authority, treating it as an indispensable collaborator in consolidating the new imperial capital's control over far-flung provinces with majority Christian populations. In a sense, they presaged the nineteenth-century Balkan states' fostering of new hierarchies to meet the needs of new regimes. After 1453, the reconstructed patriarchate, allied to the sultanate, was useful in championing, literally, Orthodoxy. The only serious Christian threat to the empire between the fall of Constantinople and the challenge from Russia in the eighteenth century came from Catholic Europe. The Sultans appointed patriarchs opposed to rapprochement between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, an issue that had roiled the church whenever Byzantium had sought aid from western Europe. In return for state support for the Orthodox hierarchy, the Ottoman-appointed patriarchs facilitated the collection of the poll tax on Christians and the *devşirme* recruitment of Christian youths for the janissary corps.¹ Thus, the Ottoman state had much to lose by dissension within the Orthodox church, and stability and order among the Orthodox community remained a key state concern after Muslims became the majority population. No grand vizier was free to tamper arbitrarily with the hierarchy.

If done solely to promote Serbian national solidarity, Sokollu Mehmed's resurrection of the patriarchate in Peć would have countered the Ottoman state's interest: a fractured hierarchy might have offered less coherent support in administrative matters. The decision met the Ottomans' needs by relieving the tension between priests in northern Serbia and their superior, the archbishop of Ohrid, in Macedonia, by removing the priests from Ohrid's jurisdiction.² The patriarchate in Peć also eased the demands on an overburdened hierarchy. Not only had Süleyman I significantly

¹ B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 48-50; P. Sherrard, 'Church, State, and the Greek War of Independence', in *The Struggle for Greek Independence*, ed. R. Clogg (London, 1973), pp. 182-5. For an illuminating example of pro-Ottoman literature issued by the Orthodox hierarchy at the dawn of the nationalist era in the Balkans, see R. Clogg, 'The "Dhidhaskalia Patriki" (1798): An Orthodox Reaction to French Revolutionary Propaganda', in R. Clogg, *Anatolica: Studies in the Greek East in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1996).

² Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 110.

enlarged the empire's European territory by capturing Belgrade in 1521 and absorbing most of Hungary in the twenty years following the battle of Mohács in 1526, but the empire's population density also increased, in line with the growth throughout sixteenth-century Europe. The enlargement of the Orthodox hierarchy increased the church's – and hence the state's – ability to control a growing population spread over a wider area. (Similarly, the ecclesiastical establishments at both Peć and Ohrid were abolished in the 1760s when the Orthodox population, which had shrunk owing to conversion and territorial losses, could no longer bear the expense.) The importance of such ecclesiastical controls was increased in the 1550s by unrest in Macedonia and Thrace, prompted by economic pressures and political uncertainty over the succession to Süleyman I. Sokollu Mehmed, whose support helped to ensure Selim II's accession, understood the benefits of more secure control over the Balkan frontier.

Even though the claim that the Orthodox church preserved Serbian identity under Ottoman rule is questionable, it has contributed to the nationalist programme of action in Kosovo. Although the Serbian population has long been a minority there, the church retains many monasteries and other properties. The claim that the church guarded the nation when no other institution existed to do so now places upon the nation the obligation to protect the church when it has few local congregants able to perform the task. The information posted on the church's website confirms its insistence that the nation should remember its duty to hold on to Kosovo, and the church's property there.¹

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THE THIRD ELEMENT of the nationalist vision of Kosovo is the story of the great migration of 1690. Less widely trumpeted than the battle of Kosovo Polje, it remains critically important. The status of the battle as the decisive blow to Serbian independence, and the portrayal of the patriarchate of Peć as the seat of a Serbian church, requires that Kosovo itself be the pure Serbian heart of the independent medieval kingdom. Yet how could this be, given the predominance in Kosovo of Muslim Albanians?

The great migration reconciles romantic national history with awkward modern reality. It portrays the Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo as descendants of Ottoman-sponsored transplants who settled there after the expulsion of the Serbs following a failed revolt against the Ottoman regime. In essence, the great migration replays the battle of Kosovo Polje, with Serbs paying a martyrs' price for resisting the barbarians.² The story shows the

¹ <http://www.kosovo.net/default3.html>.

² For summaries of the Serbian and Albanian nationalist views, see Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. xxxii, 139–

Serbs, their sense of ethno-national solidarity undimmed after 1389 despite centuries of Ottoman rule, as a cohesive, heroic nation that dared to rise against daunting odds in a bid to win freedom from foreign oppression. The story also nourishes the belief that Serbs have long been singled out by Muslims for particularly brutal treatment: what other nation did the Turks drive out of its ancestral heartland? A tragic first instance of ethnic cleansing perpetrated against Serbs, it justified the retaliation in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo in the 1990s. The power of the episode is captured in Paja Jovanović's painting, in 1898, of *The Migration of the Serbian People, 1690*, among the most famous of modern Serbian works of art.¹

Most commentators on the break-up of Yugoslavia date the rise of nationalism in politics to September 1986, when the press printed parts of a 'Memorandum' written by members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts that called on politicians to put the integrity of the Serbian people above all other considerations. The academy had previously set up a Committee for the Study of Kosovo that, in April 1984, launched an investigation into Serbian emigration from the province.² Concern over Kosovo became more marked in January 1986, when more than two hundred intellectuals from Belgrade presented a petition to the Yugoslav and Serbian assemblies which claimed that a 'long, fatal genocide' against Serbs was taking place in Kosovo and demanded an end to abuses suffered since the great migration:

History and memories still alive tell us that the exodus of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija (western Kosovo) has been going on for three centuries. Only the mentors of those who are pushing out Serbs have changed; instead of the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany, this role is now filled by the state of Albania and the ruling institutions of Kosovo itself. Instead of forced Islamization and Fascism – Stalinized chauvinism.³

Živorad Mihajlović, the Serbian author of a book on the incidents that had triggered the petition, provided illuminating comment on one notable case, the supposed impalement of a local Serb on a beer bottle by Albanian thugs. 'Here we are dealing with the remains of the Ottoman Empire ... In the time of the Turks, Serbs were being impaled, too, though even the Turks were not the ones who did it, but rather their servants – Arnauts [derived from the Ottoman for Albanians: Arnavud].'⁴ In sum, the 'long,

140; also Vickers, *Serb and Albanian*, pp. xii-xiii, 27-9.

¹ <http://www.kosovo.net/default3.html>; http://www.suc.org/culture/history/Hist_Serb_Culture/html/Migration_Paja_1690.html.

² R. Petrović and M. Blagojević, *The Migration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo and Metohija: Results of the Survey Conducted in 1985-6* (Belgrade, 1992), p. 1.

³ J. Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War* (Berkeley, 1999), p. 109.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109. Mertus explains 'Arnaut' as 'an old Serbian [*sic*] term for Muslim Albanians'. The bottle

fatal genocide' had begun with the great migration and the introduction of Albanians to Kosovo.

Could the revolt and migration of 1689-90 have happened as described? The Ottoman archives hold no 'smoking gun', neither a document that refers baldly to a mass exodus of Serbs from Kosovo, nor one stating that the great migration did not take place. It is nevertheless possible to assess circumstances from the time and place that attest to or preclude the validity of the story. Do the details accord with what is known of attitudes and actions current in the late seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire? How did the Ottomans view different ethnic groups and the task of managing the empire's population as a whole? The remainder of this article answers these questions by explaining what is known about the circumstances of the great migration, and by linking them to the Habsburg invasion of 1689-90 and rebellions by Ottoman subjects. It explains the condition of the region's inhabitants in the aftermath of the Habsburg occupation and assesses the possibility of large-scale population movements by examining conditions in neighbouring areas that affected the region's stability. Last, it explains the Ottomans' views of ethnicity, which help to reveal the ethnic make-up of the population of Kosovo before 1689.

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AS IN THE case of the battle of Kosovo Polje, few of the facts about the story of the great migration are incontestable. During the sixteen-year war (1683-99) between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League (the Habsburgs, Poles, Venetians, and, from 1686, Russia), Habsburg forces captured Belgrade, Niš, Kosovo, and Skopje in 1689, to be driven out of all of them the following year. After the Ottoman recapture of Belgrade, the Habsburg forces withdrew across the river Danube to establish a new frontier in southern Hungary, the area that is now Vojvodina, Serbia. Thousands of refugees, including the patriarch of Peć, Arsenije III, found shelter on the Habsburg side of the new border. So much, but no more, is certain.

According to Serbian national history, Kosovo's Serbs rose up to join the advancing Habsburgs in the struggle to drive out the Ottomans. When the Habsburg army withdrew, 37,000 Serbian families left with them, or fled ahead of the reconquering Ottoman horde, in answer to an 'invitation' from the Emperor Leopold I to settle in Hungary. Their places in Kosovo

story plays upon another emotion-laden trope from Serbian national history, the gruesome image of impalement used by the Ottomans to break Serbian resistance. A graphic account of impalement, the most memorable passage of Nobel Prize-winner Ivo Andrić's *Bridge on the Drina*, has ensured the vitality of the trope since the novel was published in 1945: I. Andrić, *The Bridge on the Drina* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 46-52.

were taken by Albanians, deported or encouraged to migrate from northern Albania by the Ottomans to ensure the permanent displacement of the rebellious Serbs. Catholics among the Albanians soon converted to Islam, and the settlers became staunch supporters of the Ottoman regime. Thus, Kosovo's Albanians are relatively recent immigrants, settled by the state to displace Serbs and to buttress Muslim rule.

Albanian national history presents a different view. Albanians claim descent from the Illyrians and Dardanians who inhabited Kosovo in the pre-Roman period, long before the sixth-century Slav migrations into the Balkans. According to this version of history, Albanians always formed a significant or majority group among Kosovo's population, even during the reign of the Nemanjids, the Serbian dynasty who ruled from Kosovo in the thirteenth century. The Albanian view of the events of 1689-90 is that both the supporters of the Habsburgs against the Ottomans and many of those who fled to Hungary were Albanians. In the Albanians' view, the Serbs are latecomers to historically Albanian territory.

Noel Malcolm, who offers a detailed critique of the competing versions of Kosovo's history,¹ cites evidence to suggest that Patriarch Arsenije neither sided with the Catholic Habsburgs nor led the revolt against the Ottomans. He and others who fled with the Habsburgs merely distrusted that the Ottoman reconquest of Kosovo would be peaceful. Malcolm adds that Leopold I's 'invitation' of April 1690 is best known from the doctored form published in the nineteenth century, which disguised its original purpose of persuading Serbs everywhere not to flee their homes, but rather to rise up against the resurgent Ottomans. According to Malcolm, the number of refugees to Hungary (from Serbia as a whole, not merely Kosovo) was 30,000 individuals, not 37,000 families. Thus, in his judgement, the events that followed the Habsburgs' invasion in 1689 more closely resembled the Albanian, rather than the Serbian, version of national history.² Here is a remarkable reversal, as Malcolm, like other Western historians, had previously accepted the Serbian account.³

Malcolm is criticized for being anti-Serbian, and for using his sources as selectively as the Serbs, though the more restrained of his critics only suggest that his arguments are unconvincing.⁴ Most of the documents he

¹ Malcolm, *Kosovo*. Other works, such as Vickers's *Serb and Albanian* and T. Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven, 2002), which focus on recent events, are derivative in their treatment of earlier history.

² Malcolm, *Kosovo*, ch. 8.

³ N. Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York, 1996), p. 84.

⁴ See M. Ekmečić et al., *Response to Noel Malcolm's Book, Kosovo: A Short History* (Belgrade, 2000); review by A. Djilas in *Foreign Affairs*, lxxvii (1998), 124-31; and T. Emmert, 'Review of Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*', HABSBUrg, H-Net Reviews, May, 1999. URL: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=4273926506535>.

relies on were written by enemies of the Ottoman Empire, or by officials with limited experience of the Ottoman Balkans. Habsburg records are the most informative, but as both Malcolm and Rajko Veselinović note, Habsburg officials (even their ‘experts’ on the region) had little idea of who was where, doing what, in the Balkans. Their application of terms such as Rascian, Serbian, Greek, Albanian, Turkish, and Tatar to people and places was haphazard.¹ Malcolm, like the historians of Serbia and Yugoslavia who ignore his findings, overlooks the most valuable indigenous evidence.² Unwillingness to consider Ottoman evidence when constructing national history is exemplified by the Serbian historians who commemorated the three-hundredth anniversary of the great migration by compiling a compendium of previously unpublished references to Serbs in contemporary documents, all of them Habsburg in origin and none of them Ottoman.³

Complicating assessment of ethnic histories of the great migration is the ill fit between modern ideas of ethnic or national identity and most aspects of pre-modern Ottoman life. As used here, ethnicity refers primarily not to genetics/descent, which can be a factor, but to culture, of which language and religion may be considered only parts.⁴ Ottoman officials usually did not specify the ethnicity of individuals or groups mentioned in documents; for state concerns (and probably for most of society), religious affiliation was more important. Yet the Ottomans were aware of the ethnic variety among the empire’s inhabitants: ethnicity did influence politics and other areas of public life. Metin Kunt identifies signs of ethno-regional solidarity among senior officials in the Ottoman administration,⁵ and the Ottoman regime recognized that ethnic groups were differentiated not only by languages but also by habits.⁶ Nonetheless, the Ottoman evidence for ethnic solidarity is usually too sparse to support arguments about its practical effects.

1 R. Veselinović, ‘Die “Albaner” und “Klimenten” in den österreichischen Quellen zu Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts: historisch-geographische und ethnographische Abhandlungen’, *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchiv*, xiii (1960), 197 ff.; Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 148–50.

2 See Emmert, ‘Review’. For Western historians who ignore Malcolm’s conclusions, see, e.g., J. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2000), p. 26.

3 S. Gavrilović and I. Yakšić, *Izvori o Srbima u Ugarskoj s kraja XVII i početkom XVIII veka* (Belgrade, 1987, 1990).

4 This definition follows Benjamin Braude, who fails to apply it himself, often confusing ethnicity with religion: B. Braude, ‘Venture and Faith in the Commercial Life of the Ottoman Balkans, 1500–1650’, *International History Review*, vii (1985), 519–42.

5 M. Kunt, ‘Ethnic-Regional (*Cins*) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, v (1974), 233–9.

6 For a humorous description of one high-ranking Ottoman’s views about slaves drawn from different ethnic groups, see A. Fisher, ‘Chattel Slavery in the Ottoman Empire’, *Slavery and Abolition*, i (1980), 40–1.

In this case, however, Ottoman records contain useful information about the ethnicities of the leading actors in the story. In comparison with ‘Serbs’, who were not a meaningful category to the Ottoman state, its records refer to ‘Albanians’ more frequently than to many other cultural or linguistic groups. The term ‘Arnavud’ was used to denote persons who spoke one of the dialects of Albanian, came from mountainous country in the western Balkans (referred to as ‘Arnavudluk’, and including not only the area now forming the state of Albania but also neighbouring parts of Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro), organized society on the strength of blood ties (family, clan, tribe), engaged predominantly in a mix of settled agriculture and livestock herding, and were notable fighters – a group, in short, difficult to control. Other peoples, such as Georgians, Abkhaz, Circassians, Tatars, Kurds, and Bedouin Arabs who were frequently identified by their ethnicity, shared similar cultural traits. This ethnic marker gives some hope of judging the overall accuracy of modern claims to Kosovo.

Albanians feature in pre-nineteenth-century Ottoman records because they repeatedly disrupted the peace. At a time when the state was engaged in a critical campaign for survival, Albanian lawlessness, be it simple banditry or active aid for advancing Habsburg armies, repeatedly caught the attention of the highest council of state in Istanbul, the imperial divan. Events in Kosovo, the furthest point of the Habsburg advance, also drew intense scrutiny in the divan, as did the need after the Habsburg withdrawal to revive territories devastated by the ebb and flow of battle. Orders issued by the divan, acting in the name of the Sultan, give much information about Ottoman news, views, and policies at the time of the great migration. Further information can be gleaned from petitions and other information sent from the area. Taken together, these records show a state administration struggling for survival, eager for intelligence, and ready to take whatever practical steps might help to achieve elusive goals of restoring territorial integrity, well-being, and domestic peace.

It is nevertheless reasonable to consider the possibility that the choices the Ottomans made in noting ethno-cultural groups reflected purely state concerns, rather than the ‘reality’ of provincial conditions. Since Edward Said published *Orientalism*, the field of post-colonialism studies has devoted much attention to the ‘production of knowledge’ as a tool for shaping reality to fit the purposes of imperialism, rather than for reflecting objective fact.¹ India and Africa, with territories and populations so large that European powers’ attempts to master them must seem presumptuous,

¹ E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

even foolhardy, were prime targets of such produced knowledge.¹ Scholarly judgements of societies as ‘backward’ legitimated the imperialist venture to the colonizers, and their classification of populations by race, caste, or other particularist sub-category helped to consolidate imperial control by creating divisions within the subjugated society that had not really mattered before colonization. The gaze of the imperialist, coloured by the produced knowledge imposed upon an alien culture, naturally did not reflect the views, values, and dynamics of the colonized society. Can Ottoman records be taken as a more reliable reflection of Balkan reality than can, according to post-colonialists, the British view of India?

Several features distinguish the Ottoman from the nineteenth-century European imperial ventures. One concerns the nature of empire. The British produced knowledge in India in order to understand (or to reshape into a form more conducive to their interests) an alien society; the gap between political authority and society did not yawn as widely in the Ottoman case. Unlike the British or French empires, the Ottoman empire had no true metropole, no dominant nation or state whose interests were to be served by colonies run by members of the privileged nation; insofar as there was a centre, it was the city of Istanbul, itself a polyglot, multi-ethnic reflection of the empire’s variegated population. The ‘Ottomans’ came from every region and ethnic group of the empire; some served in their places of origin, some served in distant provinces, and some served in the centre. There was no unknown part of the empire presenting a practical challenge to rival that posed to British venturers by India.²

Another significant difference between the Indian and Ottoman cases lies in the period, and the state interests involved. Particularly in the late nineteenth century, the British in India indulged the urge to classify for purposes ranging from increasing revenues by economic rationalization to maintaining race-based barriers between colonizers and colonized.³ Such imperatives were much weaker or absent in the seventeenth-century Ottoman mind. As in pre-modern states elsewhere, including Christian Europe, the Ottoman state had limited interests: beyond supporting the wealth and grandeur of the royal house, its duties included fighting external enemies and, in domestic affairs, maintaining the well-being of the

1 R. Inden, ‘Orientalist Constructions of India’, *Modern Asian Studies*, xx (1986), 401-46; G. Prakash, ‘Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xxxii (1990), 383-408.

2 The different natures of the British and Ottoman empires reflects the distinction between the traditional idea simply of a mighty state and the nineteenth-century model of the overseas ‘imperialist’ colonial venture: D. Lieven, ‘Dilemmas of Empire, 1850-1918: Power, Territory, Identity’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxxiv (1999), 163.

3 On the production of knowledge at this time in India, see G. Prakash, ‘Science “Gone Native” in Colonial India’, *Representations*, xl (1992), 153-78.

land and people by upholding the law and keeping the peace. Pro-active policies such as social engineering, or even economic innovation, were not significant imperatives for the Ottoman state.

As with any source, Ottoman documents should not be accepted unquestioningly, but the scope for the ‘imperial gaze’, for portraying the provinces as Istanbul wished to make them rather than as they were, was more limited than in the late British period of Indian history. The issue most likely to have been affected by the ‘imperial gaze’ in this period was the overstating of the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims, who belonged in separate legal categories according to Ottoman state ideology but interacted at the level of local society. There certainly seems to be little reason to think that Ottoman statesmen would have wished to create ethno-cultural groups where none existed, or to deny the existence of any such group that might touch upon the state’s limited interests. Identification of a group implies, moreover, only that members did touch upon state interests, not that the group acted as a self-conscious, integrated unit, akin to a modern nation. Only with the rise of political nationalism in the nineteenth century did Ottoman records refer commonly to individuals or groups by ethnic markers, given the inherent threat to state stability that nationalism posed, both by its very nature and because of repeated foreign interference on behalf of Christian nationalist movements.

* * * * *

THE 1690S WERE A period of turmoil in Kosovo, as in most of the Ottoman Balkans during the long, disastrous war with the Holy League. Ottoman records of the Habsburg invasion mention rebellions, devastation, population dispersal, and deportations: they cast light on who was in rebellion, where the devastation was worst, what happened to the dispersed populations, and the nature of deportations.

The Habsburgs invaded so rapidly that panic and confusion beset the western Balkans throughout the winter and spring of 1689. The Ottoman response was disordered.¹ Troop levy demands of increasing stridency went to governors in the Albanian provinces, culminating in the mass mobilization of everyone able to fight (*nefir-i amm*) in most of Arnavudluk,

¹ Oct.-Nov. 1688 [Istanbul], B(aşbakanlık Osmanlı A[rşivi], M[ühimme] D[efteri] 98, 6/3 (18). The *Mühimme Defteri* (‘Registers of Important Affairs’) contain drafts of orders issued by the imperial divan together with minutes summarizing the situation or problem that prompted discussion. The identity of recipients is not always noted, and dates are given only as ‘early’, ‘middle’, and ‘late’ thirds of the Islamic lunar-calendar months. The citations in this article state only the month. Although the registers were compiled until 1905, the proportion of important affairs covered dwindled in the eighteenth century. For historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the registers are almost valueless.

including the sanjaks (counties) of Vučitrn, Prizren, and Ohrid.¹ After seven years of war, in which defeats outnumbered victories, the call to arms met with a grudging response.² Hastily assembled and half-hearted, the Ottoman army crumbled before the invaders. The Habsburgs took Niš in September 1689 and, in October, they captured Kosovo and burned Skopje after a campaign lasting less than a fortnight.

Habsburg rule in Kosovo, which lasted two months, ended even more abruptly than it began. In January 1690, a counter-attacking Ottoman force routed a Habsburg detachment near the strategic pass of Kačanik, the chokepoint on the road between Skopje and Kosovo. The remaining Habsburg troops in Kosovo retreated to Novi Pazar (then in Bosnia, now in Serbia) and Niš, but launched raids into Kosovo that kept alive the Ottomans' fears of a second invasion. When the Ottomans, who managed to raise more Albanian troops by the offer of tax exemptions, resumed the offensive in the summer, they overwhelmed the Habsburgs. Niš surrendered in September 1690, and Belgrade on 8 October.

The Ottoman regime focused its attention on defeating the Habsburg army; local uprisings were of less concern. Yet revolts are mentioned in the records, and some did cause alarm because they created opportunities for the Habsburgs, or because they destabilized the areas to the rear of the army. One of the most alarming revolts occurred outside of Kosovo and hampered the Ottomans' efforts to stage a counter-attack. In November 1688, 'rebels and bandits' pillaged Herzegovina and Novi Pazar, spreading alarm throughout southern Bosnia and northern Kosovo, and for a time diverting troops from opposing a Habsburg threat so serious that most of the route from Belgrade to Kosovo was already empty of inhabitants. The marauders were described specifically as Albanians.³

Ottoman records also note Albanian revolt in areas and among populations to the west and south-west of Kosovo. One of the *nefir-i amm* orders sent to northern and central Albania called for the mobilization not only of notables and Albanian *levends* (seasonally recruited musketeers), but also of everyone capable of bearing arms, 'be they rebels or non-rebels'.⁴ An imperial command from February 1690 listed a number of tribes in the sanjaks of Dukagin (northern Albania and western Kosovo) and Ohrid, and in the district of Montenegro, who had allied with the Habsburgs after being incited by the 'Germans' to rebel. Such documents post-date the Habsburg withdrawal from Kosovo and indicate a mopping-up operation

¹ MD 98 contains mobilization orders dating from Dec. 1688 to June 1689. Some of the troops raised were to serve against Venice, which was threatening southern Albania and Greece.

² May 1689, MD 98, 201/3.

³ Nov. 1688, MD 98, 31/2.

⁴ April 1689, MD 98, 178/601.

by local Ottoman forces that took hostages to make sure the tribes would not step out of line in future. Important Albanian tribes or regions – Gashi, Fani, Mirëdita, Berisha, and Luri – dominate the list.¹

Unrest occurred also among other populations, but north of Kosovo. An imperial command issued in late November or early December 1688 refers, in discussing the rebellion, to *reaya* (taxpayers – in the eighteenth century, the term came to be applied exclusively to Christians) of ‘Istar Eflak’, a formerly Vlach district north of Kosovo centred on the mountainous area west of Čačak, Serbia. According to a later Serbian popular belief, the area would produce a messianic saviour sent to liberate the Christians from the Turks;² the belief may have arisen from, or contributed to, the unrest in Istar Eflak that continued long after the Habsburg withdrawal.³

Although indications of wavering resolve, revolt, and unrest in areas other than Kosovo predominate in the Ottoman records, an order of the Sultan issued in March 1690 alludes to the possible presence of rebels in the area. In the introductory section describing the current conditions in Kosovo, the order notes that anyone who had fought on the side of the infidels at the battles of Kačanik and Kosovo deserved execution.⁴ The focus of the order, however, was the insecurity facing the poor peasants of ‘that country’, most of whom had been scattered by the Habsburg invasion and were just beginning to return to their lands. Thus, the allusion to people fighting alongside the Habsburgs refers primarily not to the inhabitants of Kosovo but to rebels from neighbouring districts to the north and south-west, some of whom joined the Habsburg army.⁵

¹ Feb. 1690, MD 99, 72/6 and 76/1.

² ‘Les Structures millénaristes sud-slaves aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles’, in T. Stoianovich, *Between East and West: The Balkan and Mediterranean Worlds* (New Rochelle, 1992), iii. 5.

³ Nov.-Dec. 1688, MD 98, 35/5; Oct. 1696, MD 108, 225/1736. Vlachs, whose language is akin to Romanian, lived mostly in the mountains and practised mixed pastoral and agricultural farming. By the late twentieth century, most of them had been absorbed into regionally dominant ethnic groups, especially Serbian, Albanian, and Greek. An Ottoman chronicle confirms that peasants of Istar Eflak rebelled, joining a band of Hungarian and *haydud* (Slavic Christian?) marauders to make a force asserted to number 5-6,000: Sarı Mehmed, *Zübde-i Vekaiyat*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Ankara, 1995), p. 326.

⁴ March 1690, MD 99, 119/2. Ottoman subjects captured while bearing arms against the state often faced execution. Upon the Habsburg surrender of Niš in 1690, almost 400 such rebels were killed while regular Habsburg forces were spared: Sarı Mehmed, *Zübde*, p. 371. Even though the order of March 1690 confirms that captured rebels deserved death, it is devoted primarily to the problems of ensuring a quick return to peace, especially the related problems of curbing the Sultan’s own troops and persuading peasants to return to their farms.

⁵ Sarı Mehmed’s chronicle refers to Christian rebels in Kosovo in 1690 but gives no indication of whether they were residents of the region or rebels from neighbouring territories who joined the Habsburg advance. It gives a figure of ‘7,000 German and Hungarian and *haydud* and rebellious Albanian bandits’ around Prizren following the battle of Kačanik: Sarı Mehmed, *Zübde*, p. 354. A Habsburg roll of troops in Niš, Kosovo, and south-eastern Serbia lists *hayduds* (Heyducken) under Hungarian officers, while ‘Rätzen’ (usually translated as ‘Serbs’) are listed separately but again among Hungarian

Deserters from the Ottoman army may have been the prime targets of execution. Malcolm notes that Habsburg reports of the invasion speak of both Catholic and 'Turkish' Albanians welcoming the Habsburgs, including many who had deserted from the Ottoman army. His suggestion that these Albanians were mainly Kosovars is open to question, however. Even though, by 1689, many Albanians were reluctant to join the Ottoman army, most of the troops raised came from the large Albanian populations to the south and west, including areas affected by pro-'German' rebellion. Some who joined took the opportunity to desert when the Ottoman defences in Kosovo collapsed, going over to the winning side, at least for a time. This was not the only time during the war that significant numbers of Albanian troops deserted from Ottoman armies to join the advancing Catholic armies.¹ If those who fought for the Habsburgs included deserters from the army, the Ottoman state's punishment of them is understandable.

That ill-disciplined Albanian *levends* caused problems for both state and population is attested by the news that prompted the imperial order of March 1690. The Ottoman regime was worried about armed men in Kosovo who seized peasants returning to their farms to sell them as slaves, a legal punishment only for non-Muslims who refused to pay the *cizye* head tax. The lawbreakers included not only soldiers stationed in Kosovo, but also roving gangs (*çeta*) of Albanians, nominally units of the army, who paid little heed to military discipline. The imperial government ordered the freeing of anyone enslaved who was not known to have joined the League's army, and the punishment of those who had enslaved him. Clearly, most peasants in Kosovo had fled to escape the fighting and returned home after it shifted to the north. Plundering and enslavement by gangs on specious grounds of rebellion were a more common problem.² Had rebellion in Kosovo been widespread, the Ottoman authorities would not have treated local Christians as 'innocent until proved guilty'.

The argument that the imperial government, loath to admit the existence of rebellion, preferred to describe it as flight from the path of the opposing armies, ignores the imperial government's discussion of the potential for, and occurrence of, revolt in and around Kosovo during the subsequent

troops; indeed, are described as 'ungarische Räzen [*sic*]' in another troop list: P. Röder von Diersburg, *Des Markgrafen Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden Feldzüge wider den Türken* (Karlsruhe, 1839-42), ii, Urkunden, 167-8, 194-5. This same Hungarian-*haydud* combination was noted in Istar Effak, raising the likelihood that the core of these troops came with the Habsburg invasion.

¹ Oct. 1690, MD 100,100/393 and 108/1; June 1698, MD 110, 435/1922. Troops on both the Montenegrin and Greek fronts abandoned fortresses to the Venetians.

² Similar abuse is reported in the religious court records from Alasonya (Elasson, Greece), dated mid-Jan. 1691, in J. Vasdravelis, *Klephths Armatoles and Pirates in Macedonia during the Rule of the Turks (1627-1821)* (Thessaloniki, 1975), p. 118.

wars against the Habsburgs, in 1716-8 and 1736-9.¹ In these later instances, Albanians figure prominently among the restless Christians, although in the late 1730s the unrest spread among Orthodox Slavs in some districts of Kosovo and Skopje. Although the Ottoman records suggest that the depopulation in the 1710s and 1730s, as in 1690, affected primarily areas north of Kosovo nearer the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier, rebellion in Kosovo, be it among Christian Serbs or Christian Albanians, was of greater concern to the Ottoman government in the eighteenth century than it had been in 1689-90, when it paled by comparison with the unrest in the districts to the north, west, and south-west.

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HOWEVER SLIGHT THE rebellion in Kosovo, the regions through which armies marched or which they raided took several years to recover, in particular the central corridor through Vučitrn to Skopje, the route taken by first the Habsburg and then the Ottoman armies. It suffered disruption to settlement and later from banditry.

In an attempt to ensure that Kosovo became productive again as quickly as possible, the imperial government tried in February 1690 to encourage peasants who had fled from the sanjaks of Skopje and Vučitrn upon the Habsburg invasion to return home, promising them protection from unjustified punishments. With both marauders and the Habsburg army nearby, the peasants' reluctance is understandable.² But it alarmed Ottoman officials: if the peasants failed to return before the spring planting, food shortages would increase, increasing the likelihood that peasants would turn to banditry. To prevent this, the imperial government threatened to sell the lands and possessions of anyone who failed to return.³ Most of the *reaya* responded to the combination of threat with encouragement, but a few took to banditry.⁴ One band that threatened to disrupt commerce through the Kačanik pass in 1692 numbered only fifteen men.⁵ Similarly, a security force of Albanians raised in western Kosovo (Prizren and Dukagin) to hunt bandits in the northern and central districts amounted to fewer than a hundred men.⁶ Such figures pale by comparison with the swarms of bandits who infested the forests between Belgrade, Niš, and

¹ Sept. 1717, MD 126, 119, and 120; Aug. 1737, MD 143, 144/1-2, and 145/1; June 1738, MD 145, 152/1; Aug. 1738, MD 145, 181; Dec. 1739, MD 147, 41/4; June 1742, MD 148, 308/4.

² Feb. 1690, MD 99, 74/3, gives the first indication that peasants remained insecure in post-Habsburg Kosovo.

³ Feb. 1690, MD 99, 74/3.

⁴ May 1690, MD 100, 9/23; May 1695, MD 106, 436.

⁵ March 1692, MD 102, 143/1; Nov. 1692, MD 104, 99/445.

⁶ March 1696, MD 108, 772-3.

Dragoman on the Bulgarian border, and with the thousands of Albanian musketeers deployed in repeated campaigns to hunt them down.¹ The Ottomans' efforts to encourage peasants to return to their farms must have had some success.

There was an additional reason for the imperial government's eagerness to resettle the population of Kosovo: the silver mines in Vučitrn county. A memorandum from the grand vizier to the Sultan on the steps needed to revive the mines in 1708 notes that many *reaya* – whom the report describes as Bulgarian (*Bulgar*) – had fled the mines, some at the time of the Habsburg invasion, others later.² In this case, too, the state had difficulty in luring back everyone who had fled, partly owing to the harsh conditions in the mines, and notwithstanding their exemption from many taxes. The miners who fled from the path of the armies did not head north to Hungary – or to parts of Serbia where they might have been welcomed as resettlers of deserted lands – but to safer districts nearby, where they settled down to normal peasant life and often evaded enrolment on the tax registers. The abandonment by miners of dangerous work underground for the more predictable life of the farmer was a seventeenth-century problem that became a lasting trend.³

The continuing stresses of war were the major obstacle to re-establishing the state of affairs in 1688. This was well illustrated in Skopje. A petition from representatives of the residents of Skopje and surrounding villages to the Sultan dated May 1697, seeking a reduction in a compulsory sale of grain to the state, avowed that the district had yet to recover from the Habsburg invasion: everyone who had escaped death remained in severely straitened circumstances.⁴ The key factor hindering the economic recovery, and limiting the peasants' capacity to produce the amount of grain demanded, was the continued drain in manpower. Most of the district's able-bodied men had been enrolled in the army: those who remained behind were unable to pay the ever-increasing taxes, let alone supply grain for compulsory purchase.⁵ A similar state of affairs, caused by the strains of

¹ April 1692, MD 102, 218/2; 1695, MD 106, b.

² 20 May 1708 [BA], Cev[det] D[a]h[i]liye] 8335.

³ See, petition from supervisor of mines, Karatovo, n.d. [pre-1683] [BA], İ[bnül-]E[min] D[a]h[i]liye] 902 regarding emigration of miners from Macedonia to Hungary, Bosnia, and Rumelia. Silver mining had become more difficult to maintain in the Balkans during the seventeenth century for economic reasons, as well: Ş. Pamuk, 'In the Absence of Domestic Currency: Debased European Coinage in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire', *Journal of Economic History*, lvii (1997), 358.

⁴ May 1697, Cev. DH 1553. This document contains the original petition composed by the *kadı* (judge) of Skopje, notations on the margin by a clerk from the treasury stating the amount of grain assessed from the petitioning region, the grand vizier's recommendation to the Sultan that the relief be granted, and the palace's approval of the recommendation.

⁵ Despite the imperial government's disapproval, the levies in Arnavudluk were recruited from both Muslims and Christians: Dec. 1694, MD 106, 1327.

supplying the war effort, affected neighbouring areas that had escaped the violence of the Habsburg invasion.¹ But even though too few young men were available to work the farms properly, the district had not been depopulated, nor seen large-scale immigration by Albanians or Slavs, since 1690. That the district straddling Kosovo's southern border had not been emptied and repopulated in the years after the Habsburg invasion suggests that the theory of mass emigration overstates the degree of desolation in Kosovo.

This conclusion is confirmed by a complaint about lawlessness sent to the divan in 1716, the first year of the next war with the Habsburgs (1716-18), when fifteen Albanians, classified as rebels, resisted attempts to collect taxes from four villages in the Drenica valley, west of Priština: Komorane, Kišna Reka (Ottoman: Najdaka), Donji Zabel (Ottoman: Zail), and Stan-kovce. The local Albanians also refused to pay the tithe (*öşür*), balked at selling and transporting grain ordered for the military staging posts at Niš and Sarajevo, plundered the goods and crops of the *reaya*, and disobeyed their *sipahis*.²

A notation made by a clerk of the imperial treasury on the margin of the complaint, which details the assessment of taxes on the *kaza*, lists 532 peasant householders working their farms (Muslims on *çiftlik*s, Christians on *baştina*s), 255 Albanian households, and 35 households descended from earlier Muslim settlers. The figures suggest an ethnically mixed population of predominantly Slav 'peasants', with the possibility of an admixture of others, such as settled Vlachs. This conclusion is suggested not by the use of the Slavic term '*baştina*' – adopted and widely used by the Ottoman state shortly after its conquest of the Balkans – but rather by the lack of an alternative means of differentiating them from the Albanians, who were integrated into the *timar* system and were not solely livestock herders. Thus, Ottoman tax records suggests that central Kosovo had not been emptied of Slav inhabitants, or other long-established households, by either war with the Habsburgs or mass emigration.

Kosovo in the decade following the Habsburg withdrawal experienced a degree of lawlessness, principally in the central corridor running from Vučitrn through Kačanik to Skopje. The lawlessness was less extreme than in the surrounding territory, including what is now Serbia to the north,

¹ A petition of 1691 from peasants of Korça district (south-eastern Albania) asking the Sultan and his ministers for a reduction in taxes details the various extraordinary contributions to support the army that they had already made: 1 Jan. 1691, İE DH 889.

² 18 June 1716, Cev. DH 443. The document, which has suffered water damage but remains mostly legible, includes a complaint about the Albanians' firing upon representatives of the supervisor of revenues in Skopje who had been sent to collect taxes due to the imperial government. It also includes notations on the margin giving the information about tax assessments in the region supplied by the imperial treasury.

where much of the population fled their homes and banditry flourished. Nothing comparable in scale happened in Kosovo.

* * * * *

WHILE THE OTTOMAN records contradict the notion of the widespread depopulation of Kosovo, and that any war-induced fall in population affected only Serbs, they hint at population shifts in parts of the Balkans, including the deportation and resettlement of Albanians, without buttressing the claim that today's Kosovar Albanians are descendants of people whom the Ottomans deported, or encouraged to migrate, in order to repopulate the area after 1690.¹ Like the lawlessness, the Ottoman-sponsored population movements affected neighbouring areas more markedly than Kosovo.

The purpose of the compulsory purchase of grain to which the peasants of Skopje objected in May 1697 was to provide food and seeds for Albanians being deported from the Skopje district to resettle emptied lands in Aleksinac, Jagodina, and Kinaloğlu (a military staging post between the other two towns).² All three of them were important points north-west of Niš along the road to Belgrade. The imperial government saw nothing amiss with the principle of moving Albanians to repopulate deserted areas, when other measures failed: after the area between Niš and Belgrade lost most of its inhabitants during and after the Habsburg occupation, resettlement by Albanians was one of the steps the imperial government took to repopulate it. The government offered an amnesty to former rebels from the most seriously affected areas in a bid to persuade them to return,³ on condition that they accept their former status of *zimmi*, which meant resuming payment of the *cizye* head tax. Former rebels who refused were to be punished 'without mercy'.⁴ No such amnesty was offered in Kosovo, which had suffered less severe and enduring disruption.

When peasants failed to resettle the land in Serbia, notwithstanding the amnesty, the Ottoman regime offered the inducement of tax breaks.⁵ Many of the peasants who tried to return to central and northern Serbia were seized en route by Ottoman officials who were short of men to work their own *timars* and *zeamets*. Under such coercion, the *reaya* returned to the

¹ A more extreme alternative explanation states that they are descendants of Serbians converted to Islam and then 'Albanized'. No remotely plausible explanation for why this should have happened can be offered.

² May 1697, Cev. DH 1553.

³ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 161, 163.

⁴ Sept. 1690, MD 100, 100/392, discusses the punishment for the fifty bandits (*haydud*) among those returning to thirty villages around Bogato near the current Serbian-Bulgarian border at Dragoman.

⁵ July 1695, MD 106, 766, e.g., cites tax exemptions for *reaya* who returned to villages around Alaca Hisar (Krusevac, Serbia, to the west of Aleksinac).

hills and banditry.¹ Only after such failures did the state deport settlers to a strategically vital area, to make it productive again and to control the persistent problem of marauders threatening the road to Belgrade.

Deportation was a last resort after less intrusive steps had failed. In the case of the clans or tribes from the highlands of Albania who rose in support of the Habsburgs in 1690, the Ottoman authorities took hostages for future good behaviour rather than inflicting punishments such as deportation. Only in cases of recurring lawlessness were large groups uprooted and resettled. In 1692, for example, five hundred Albanian 'rebels' were deported from the highlands of İballa (northern Albania), to be resettled 'away from Muslims',² because the disruptions they caused had been sufficiently severe and prolonged to merit expulsion. Central or northern Serbia, relatively nearby but largely empty of both Muslims and Christians, was the likely destination. The object in such cases of deportation was the revival of prosperity in the place left rather than the potential benefit to the place of resettlement.

Whereas there is little reason to think that the deportations designed to resettle central Serbia were replicated further south, there is one known case of deportation as a form of punishment to the western fringe of Kosovo. The Catholic Albanian Këlmendi tribe of northern Albania and southern Montenegro engaged in rebellion and banditry throughout the 1690s, as they had done repeatedly.³ The government subdued them by means of a ban on the provision of food and other supplies from territory under Ottoman control. After their resistance crumbled, many were temporarily resettled in the vicinity of Peć and Rozaje (in Montenegro), where close watch could be kept on them. As the move also brought them within easy reach of Muslim ulema, some of them apparently converted to Islam. In 1702, the imperial government decided that the converts should be rewarded with empty lands 'suitable to their condition' in the districts of Prizren and Vučitrn.⁴

These events, also recorded in the Vatican records, are used to support Serbian claims about the large-scale settlement of Albanians in Kosovo. Malcolm cites the stability of the Catholic Këlmendi population figures

¹ Sept. 1698, MD 110, 484/2181; June 1699, MD 111, 33/95.

² Feb. 1692, MD 102, 138.

³ See N. Malcolm, 'The Këlmendi: Notes on the Early History of a Catholic Albanian Clan', *Südost-Forschungen*, lix-lx (2000-1), 149-63.

⁴ July 1702, MD 112, 289/1051. Although the possibility of conversion work by dervishes always exists, it should not be assumed automatically that men of religion schooled in orthodox belief and practice were absent from the frontier of Ottoman control or uninvolved in conversion among clans. A complaint about taxes and insecurity around Rozaje, forwarded to the imperial divan by the kadi of Tırgovište (between Novi Pazar and Rozaje), refers to ulema living in the fortress of Rozaje: March 1713, Cev. DH 12911.

reported to Rome in the 1700s in order to cast doubt on the resettlement of anyone from the tribe in Kosovo.¹ The fact that Catholic clerics reported a round figure of '2,000' Catholic Këlmendi to be living in the region north of Peć in 1700, and again in 1706, testifies to the continued presence of the tribe but, by itself, does not preclude the emigration of some converts to underpopulated parts of Prizren and Vučitrn.

As Prizren and Vučitrn were not as depopulated as the region between Niš and Belgrade, they may have had difficulty in absorbing more than a few families of potentially troublesome immigrants. The order assigning land in the area to Këlmendi converts stressed that only deserted plots were to be allocated to them, in order to prevent disputes. It thus seems unlikely that the numbers resettled by the government would have been large enough to alter radically the ethnic make-up of either territory: the Ottoman government deported troublesome groups to places where they had a reasonable chance of melding with the established populations, or where the inhabitants would know how to keep them in check, and the choice of resettlement areas was governed by similarities in language and culture between deportees and their new neighbours. In 1706, not long after the Këlmendi were resettled, the imperial government ordered the deportation of rebellious Slavic Orthodox tribes from western Montenegro. Although these tribes lived in the province of Shkodra (northern Albania), whose governor was trying to subdue them, responsibility for the resettlement was given to the governors of the Slavic Orthodox territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina, struggling to recover from the war, in which the tribes resettled.² The Këlmendi, by contrast, were resettled in areas already inhabited by Albanians. To assess the principles underlying and the effects of such resettlement, one needs to understand the ethnic pattern of Kosovo's population before the Habsburg invasion.

* * * * *

WHATEVER THE DIFFICULTIES in determining the ethnicities of the populations of the Ottoman Balkans, one characteristic is undeniable: none could be accurately termed genetically, linguistically, or religiously 'pure'. Centuries of migration, invasion, conquest, and reconquest left no district unaltered. Thus, Ottoman administrative divisions tended to reflect geographical features and patterns of conquest, rather than 'boundaries' between peoples. Such was the case with Kosovo.

¹ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 165-6. In a footnote, he refers to the misreading of sources by the Serbian historian R. Tričković. This view of Albanian settlement conflicts directly with that of Veselinović, "Albaner" und "Klimenten", who suggests that the 'Klimenten' (the group linked in Habsburg sources with revolt against the Ottomans in 1689-90) were Montenegrin Slavs.

² May 1706, Cev. DH 6039; June 1706, MD 115, 44/2-3; Oct. 1706, MD 115, 146/1-4.

Most of the Balkan peninsula south of the Danube was bundled together in Rumelia, the 'country of the Romans' (Ottoman: Rum ili). 'Rum' is commonly translated as 'Greek', but 'Romans' meant the Christians of Eastern Rome, Byzantium, who were Orthodox by religion but not necessarily Greeks by ethnicity. Rumelia did not derive its name from being inhabited by Christians whereas Anatolia was not, but rather from having marked a frontier of Christendom, defended by the Eastern Roman Empire, that was difficult to penetrate, much as Erzerum, or Arz-i Rum, the 'land of the Romans,' marked the Muslim-Byzantine frontier of medieval eastern Anatolia. Once the Balkan defences were breached in the mid-fourteenth century, conquest was rapid: most of what is now European Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, Albania, Kosovo, and southern Serbia initially fell to the Ottomans within forty years. Much of this region, with its ethnic and religious complexity, fell under the command of the *beylerbey* ('bey of beys', or chief military commander) of Rumelia.

Later major conquests in Europe were administered separately from Rumelia, whether or not the borders coincided with ethnic divisions. The kingdom of Bosnia (with Herzegovina), conquered in the 1460s, was transformed into the province of Bosna. In this case, it happened that dialects of a common Slavic language predominated among the population throughout the territory, leading to the Ottoman tendency to call the language 'Bošnjakca', rather than our more common name, until recently, of Serbo-Croatian. The administrative frontiers of Bosna, however, did not also mark the limits of the Bošnjakca-speaking population.

Although the Ottoman government did not create a formal administrative unit in Albania, it treated the region termed 'Arnavudluk' as a territory with special status, in some ways akin to Bosna, the other key mountainous region of the Ottoman Balkans, rather than as just another part of Rumelia. As in Bosna, dialects of one language were dominant (but not universal), but language alone did not determine the extent of Arnavudluk. More important to determining a district's inclusion was its possession of Albanian social structure: clannish, riven by faction, governed by harsh codes of customary law. These characteristics were marked among the Ghegs of the north but also characterized Tosk, Cham, and other Albanian groups. Differences in customs between Albania and Bosna were more a matter of degree than of kind.

The Ottoman method of ruling a fractious, bellicose population was to work through the established leaders. Bosnian historians have long claimed that the province's traditional leading '*kapudan*' families were descended from the nobility of the independent kingdom of Bosnia. There is probably some truth to the claim. In the case of Arnavudluk, the imperial government tended to appoint governors from a handful of notable Alb-

anian families (*'beyzades'*), usually (but not always) making them responsible for their home districts. In the mountainous Gheg district of Shkodra, the Buşatlı/Bushati family, headed in the 1690s by Süleyman Pasha, held the governorship practically as a birthright.¹ Such an arrangement should not be construed as privilege or autonomy, let alone as a sign that the Ottomans had not conquered Albania; such districts paid the usual array of taxes and, more significant, had to provide large numbers of soldiers. The Ottoman government appointed leading members of notable families or clans and tribes (*'ocakzades'*) as governors or other high provincial officials because their status and knowledge of how to manage such a society increased the chances of collecting the taxes and recruiting the soldiers.

Western and central Kosovo, at the least, fell within Ottoman Arnavudluk, being its key frontier defence against the Habsburgs.² Troop movement orders confirm that western Kosovo was also a reliable source of Albanian soldiers before the Habsburg invasion:³ an order of February 1690, offering tax concessions to Albanian districts to encourage them to raise more troops, was sent to *kadıns* (religious court judges) in Prizren province, including the judge in 'Hassiha-yi Arnavud', presumably the present-day western Kosovo town of Has.⁴ This explicitly Albanian settlement should be paired with the larger nearby town of Yakova (Djakova), which is thought to have been Albanian since its founding in the late sixteenth century.⁵

While the ethnic roots of some settlements can be determined from the Ottoman records, Serbian and Albanian historians have at times read too much into them in their running dispute over the ethnic history of early Ottoman Kosovo. Their attempts to use early Ottoman provincial surveys (*tahrir defterleri*) to gauge the ethnic make-up of the population in the fifteenth century have proved little.⁶ Leaving aside questions arising from

¹ The Bushati (Buşatlı) family is often said to have become a local dynasty only with the accession in 1757 of Mehmed Pasha, whose son Kara Mahmud governed northern Albania between 1775 and 1796 with little regard to Istanbul's control (see F. F. Anscombe, 'Albanians and "Mountain Bandits"', in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830*, ed. F. F. Anscombe [Princeton, 2006], pp. 87-113). Evliya Çelebi, who visited Shkodra in 1662, stated that the hereditary governors came from the village of Bushat: R. Dankoff and R. Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions (Kosovo, Montenegro, Ohrid)* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 29, 31. Ottoman records confirm that Süleyman Pasha was a Bushati (Aug. 1696, MD 108, 1554).

² Feb. 1690, MD 99, 76/2.

³ MD 98, 54/1. One of the Holy League's histories of the campaign also calls Mahmud a 'Pasha of Albania': C. Contarini, *Istoria della Guerra di Leopoldo I. Imperadore e de' Principi Collegati contro il Turco* (Venice, 1710), ii. 166.

⁴ Feb. 1690, MD 99, 77/242.

⁵ M. Kiel, *Ottoman Architecture in Albania (1385-1912)* (Istanbul, 1990), p. 21.

⁶ See, for an Albanian example, S. Pulaha, 'On the Presence of Albanians in Kosova during the 14th-17th Centuries', in *The Truth on Kosova*, ed. K. Prifti et al. (Tirana, 1993), pp. 33-47. For the opposing claim that Kosovo's early Ottoman population was overwhelmingly Serb and remained so until the

Kosovo

seventeenth century, see A. Urošević, 'Ethnic Processes in Kosovo during the Turkish Rule', in *Kosovo: Past and Present*, ed. G. Filipović (Belgrade, 1989), pp. 41-8.

the dialects and pronunciation of the census scribes, interpreters, and even priests who baptized those recorded, no natural law binds ethnicity to name. Imitation, in which the customs, tastes, and even names of those in the public eye are copied by the less exalted, is a time-tested tradition and one followed in the Ottoman Empire. Some Christian *sipahis* in early Ottoman Albania took such Turkic names as Timurtaş, for example, in a kind of cultural conformity completed later by conversion to Islam.¹ Such cultural mimicry makes onomastics an inappropriate tool for anyone wishing to use Ottoman records to prove claims so modern as to have been irrelevant to the pre-modern state.

The seventeenth-century Ottoman notable and author Evliya Çelebi, who wrote a massive account of his travels around the empire and abroad, included in it details of local society that normally would not appear in official correspondence; for this reason, his account of a visit to several towns in Kosovo in 1660 is extremely valuable. Evliya confirms that western and at least parts of central Kosovo were 'Arnavud'. He notes that the town of Vuçitrn had few speakers of 'Boşnakca'; its inhabitants spoke Albanian or Turkish.² He terms the highlands around Tetovo (in Macedonia), Peć, and Prizren the 'mountains of Arnavudluk'.³ Elsewhere, he states that 'the mountains of Peć' lay in Arnavudluk, from which issued one of the rivers converging at Mitrovica, just north-west of which he sites Kosovo's border with Bosna. This river, the Ibar, flows from a source in the mountains of Montenegro north-north-west of Peć, in the region of Rozaje to which the Këlmendi would later be moved. He names the other river running by Mitrovica as the Kıláb and says that it, too, had its source in Arnavudluk; by this he apparently meant the Lab, which today is the name of the river descending from mountains north-east of Mitrovica to join the Sitnica north of Priština. As Evliya travelled south, he appears to have named the entire stretch of river he was following the Kıláb, not noting the change of name when he took the right fork at the confluence of the Lab and Sitnica. Thus, Evliya states that the tomb of Murad I, killed in the battle of Kosovo Polje, stood beside the Kıláb, although it stands near the Sitnica outside Priština. Despite the confusion of names, Evliya included in Arnavudluk not only the western fringe of Kosovo, but also the central mountains from which the Sitnica ('Kıláb') and its first tributaries descend.⁴

1 I. M. Kunt, 'Transformation of *Zimmi* into *Askeri*', in *Christians and Jews*, ed. Braude and Lewis, pp. 59-60.

2 Dankoff and Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi*, pp. 15, 17.

3 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, ed. A. Cevdet (Istanbul, 1897-8), v. 556; German translation of Evliya's description of Skopje in H. Duda, *Balkantürkische Studien* (Vienna, 1949), p. 25.

4 Dankoff and Elsie, *Evliya Çelebi*, pp. 13, 17.

Given that a large Albanian population lived in Kosovo, especially in the west and centre, both before and after the Habsburg invasion of 1689-90, it remains possible, in theory, that at that time in the Ottoman Empire, one people emigrated en masse and another immigrated to take its place. Granted that the Ottoman authorities were aware of ethnicity, what importance did it carry for them, and what influence did it exert over the general populace?

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ETHNICITY MATTERED LITTLE to the Ottoman imperial government, because it seemed to have little practical importance. Although ethnic groups might have had, or be thought to have had, particular habits, none acted as one solely because of sharing a language or ethnicity. The group solidarities identified by Kunt were regional as much as ethnic-linguistic: governmental cliques formed along Balkan (Albanian and Bosnian) versus Caucasus (Abkhaz, Circassian, Georgian) lines, which suggests that familiarity with the cultural outlook standard to a region, rather than shared descent or language, formed the basis of alliance. Hence the Ottoman practice of not bothering to note ethnicities, except when dealing with the fractious groups who lived on the inhospitable fringes of the empire, such as Albanians, Kurds, and the peoples of the Caucasus.¹ The complexity of the Ottoman state's attitude towards its Albanian inhabitants arose in part from Albanians' inability to act as a predictable, cohesive group. The cultural traits mentioned above, particularly clannishness and conformity to customary law, set Albanians apart from other subjects of the Sultan and militated against strong social cohesion or unity of purpose within Albanian society.

The imperial authorities prized one of the Albanians' characteristics: their fighting abilities. The stress placed upon the need to recruit Albanian infantry stands out among the stream of orders calling in 1688-9 for levies of troops from Arnavudluk. Albanians' martial qualities also made them of use in pacifying and resettling the chaotic area between Niš and Belgrade. The Ottoman state so valued the Albanians that it took all steps possible to obtain the help of their military leaders: in February 1690, following the expulsion of the Habsburg army from Kosovo, for instance, the imperial government ordered the Ottoman army commander, who was still headquartered near Skopje, to distribute twenty-five imperial properties (*havass-i hümayûn*) in the vicinity of the city as *mukataa* (assigned revenue) among leaders of Albanian tribal groups distinguished for their

¹ In describing the characteristics of various ethnicities, the Ottoman authorities lumped together Kurds with Albanians: Fisher, 'Chattel Slavery', pp. 40-1.

fighting skills. This attempt to strengthen key Albanian military leaders was followed immediately by orders to Albanian districts for additional troop levies.¹

Yet the Ottoman state also had reason to distrust Albanians whose pugnacity and fragmented social structure made them difficult to control. Feuding between clans was routine in the Albanian provinces, and the maintenance of public security was a never-ending chore. The complexity of intracommunal relations, rather than practical problems born of Albanian ethnic solidarity, explains why the Ottomans recognized Arnavudluk as distinctive and noted Albanian ethnicity in records. Some clans and tribes, forever ready to revolt, took advantage of any opportunity to pillage areas undefended by the Ottoman army, while others stayed 'loyal'. Although the Ottoman army itself depended heavily upon Albanian manpower and used loyal Albanians to good effect, including in action against Albanian rebels, their level of discipline was erratic. Even senior state officials could be difficult to manage.

In March 1696, at the same time as the imperial divan sent troops from Prizren and Peć to quell banditry in northern and central Kosovo, the *beylerbey* of Rumelia, Süleyman Pasha, posted similar detachments of Albanian troops (some from Peć) further afield in the Balkans: he appears to have acted on his own authority rather than on orders from the imperial divan. A member of the Bushati family, Süleyman had governed the province of Shkodra before being promoted to *beylerbey* of Rumelia. The key to the Bushati family's influence was its carefully cultivated relations with clans and tribes from the mountains of northern Albania, Montenegro, and western Kosovo. Süleyman used these to his own advantage while the war distracted the imperial government's attention by stationing his adherents, Albanians from the highlands, along the most important trade and communications routes across the Balkans. In effect, he created under his own authority the unified *derbend* (mountain pass) system that the imperial government instituted after the war with the Holy League to co-ordinate the defence of vulnerable communications chokepoints. Previously, the imperial government had held villages near mountain passes responsible for maintaining security in their neighbourhoods. After Süleyman recognized the influence accruing to anyone with systematic control over communications, the imperial divan, learning the lesson, asserted its control by appointing the officer to administer the system. As was to happen under the *derbend* system, the presence of outsiders, especially Albanians, led to complaints from the residents of nearby towns. They objected to disturbances caused by Süleyman's troops, whom they regarded as superfluous,

¹ Feb. 1690, MD 99, 77/240-1 ff.

either because bandits were not a threat locally, or because they could handle such threats without help.¹

As the frictions that characterized relationships within Albania's faction-ridden society followed the Albanians into the areas into which groups of them moved, the Ottoman imperial government was unlikely to have encouraged migration from the Albanian highlands to Kosovo to displace either Serbs or other settled populations. Kosovo was not sufficiently disordered, or depopulated, to justify risking the clan conflicts and turmoil likely to follow waves of immigration. The Ottoman authorities tried to control, and to discourage, migration to Kosovo by punitive taxes. Whereas each *baştina/çiftlik* peasant in central Kosovo was assessed 60 *akça*, each Albanian household was assessed 200 *akça*, perhaps because Albanians were seen as potential troublemakers.² Not that the Ottomans' rules were novel: fines for crimes such as brawling had been doubled for Albanians in the fourteenth-century law code of Stefan Dušan, the Serbian ruler of Kosovo.³

Notwithstanding the Ottoman government's wariness, the Catholic church recorded the arrival in Kosovo of migrants from the Albanian highlands:⁴ widespread poverty, among other trials, could have prompted a lasting pattern of emigration from northern Albania to other parts of Arnavudluk, including Kosovo. Particularly damaging was the faction-fighting in Shkodra and surrounding lands, the most extreme example of the mass violence in Albania that splintered communities. Süleyman Pasha, in his attempt to build a network of supporters spreading from northern Albania throughout the Balkans, inevitably made enemies,⁵ and in 1696, civil conflict broke out in the town of Shkodra. It spread to the guilds of Shkodra; the garrisons and inhabitants of the frontier fortresses of Bar and Ulcinj (in Montenegro), whose garrisons were closely linked to Shkodra's guilds; highland tribes, including the Këlmendi; and notables from the surrounding districts, stretching from Montenegro to Prizren and Dukagin. The rebels sacked hundreds of houses, and many others no doubt were destroyed by Süleyman's adherents. The violence, which spread as far as Peć, continued intermittently until 1757, when Mehmed Pasha re-established Bushati family control over the province until the 1830s.⁶

1 March 1696, MD 108, 404-5; June 1696, MD 108, 1049.

2 18 June 1716, Cev. DH 443.

3 Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 4.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3.

5 March 1695, MD 105, 132/527; March 1696, MD 108, 87/740; June 1696, MD 108, 1423. A delegation of the disaffected from Shkodra had travelled to Sofia in 1695 to complain about Süleyman to Sultan Mustafa II, who was heading to the front for the annual campaign season, but their complaints were deemed unproven: J. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches* (Graz, 1963), vi. 608.

6 Aug. 1696, MD 108, 1554-9; Sept. 1696, MD 108, 1681; Oct. 1696, MD 108, 1763; Oct. 1699, MD 111,

Strong connections linked the province of Shkodra with western Kosovo, at the time and later. The Mahmudbeyzades (Albanian: Mahmutbegolli), an Albanian family that provided a series of governors for Prizren and Dukagin, played a leading role in the attempts to restore stability in Shkodra.¹ The chief lieutenant of Mahmudbeyzade Mahmud Pasha, governor of Prizren and Dukagin from 1688 to 1696, was Yusuf Shala, whose name indicates family ties to the highlands of northern Shkodra province.² One of the leading anti-Bushati rebels was Hüseyin Rota, who held high office in the guild of tailors in Shkodra.³ He presumably came from the Rotulli (Rota-oğlu) family, which would dominate Prizren in the late eighteenth century when the Bushati family were again in control of Shkodra. It seems plausible that adherents of these opposing families tended to drift with their leaders, the pro-Bushati towards Shkodra, the pro-Rotulli and Mahmutbegolli towards Kosovo. Later bouts of factional conflict may have led others along a similar path. The assumption also explains what happened to the Këlmendi: the most troublesome tribe of Catholic Bushati supporters were deported to Rozaje, where the anti-Bushati Albanian faction was in control and could keep watch on them; only those who gave a clear sign of changing his allegiance, by converting to Islam, were to be allowed off the Rozaje 'reservation'. Some who did not convert staged mass 'breakouts' from Rozaje in 1707 and 1711, managing to battle their way back to Shkodra province.⁴

Such events required neither migration by large numbers of Serbs nor Ottoman expulsions; conditions in the province of Shkodra, not in Kosovo or Istanbul, determined the movement. Tribesmen merely moved to other parts of Arnavudluk away from the turbulent highlands of Shkodra. Western and central Kosovo, which already contained large Albanian populations before 1689, continued to contain them in the decades after 1690; rather than being marked by cataclysms, the ethnic history of Kosovo remained free from traumatic transitions until the age of nationalism. Notwithstanding the historical myths cited by political activists, there was no 'great migration' and no hint of 'genocide' against Serbs living under Ottoman rule.

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AS IN OTHER cases in which history has been used to mobilize support for aggression, the brutal campaign launched by Milošević to 'keep' Kosovo

376, and 526; July 1700, MD 111, 1215; Z. Shkodra, *Esnafet Shqiptare (Shekujt XV-XX)* (Tirana, 1973), p. 261.

¹ July 1700, MD 111, 1214.

² July 1696, MD 108, 1508.

³ July 1700, MD 111, 1215.

⁴ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 165-6.

Serbian had no viable historical justification. Verifiable history contradicts the claim that Ottoman Kosovo was intrinsically, and exclusively, Serbian, and neither the battle of Kosovo Polje nor the Ottoman patriarchate of Peć carried the meanings assigned to them by Serbian nationalism since its rise in the nineteenth century. That the battle took place and that the patriarchate existed is well attested: the occurrence of the third incident crucial to Serbian national history is problematic. The Ottoman records, the only significant indigenous source available, make no mention either of large-scale Serbian revolt in Kosovo or – in an early case of ethnic cleansing – of Ottoman actions that led to a mass migration by Serbs and the subsequent relocation of Albanians to displace them. Far from being in turmoil in 1689-90, Kosovo was calmer than the surrounding areas. The Ottomans did try to move population groups in some of them, but had no need to in Kosovo itself. The ‘great migration’, like the events of the battle of Kosovo Polje, is the stuff of legend rather than history.

It could be said that belief matters more than fact, certainly for adherents to national history. One of the underappreciated aspects of Milošević’s speech at the six-hundredth anniversary of the battle of Kosovo Polje, for example, was his deft assertion that historians might challenge the story of the battle without invalidating its nationalist truth.¹ In whatever manner Kosovo’s present legal limbo may be ended, the province is unlikely to return to Belgrade’s administrative control. The official Serbian reaction, if it echoes Milošević’s, would prove troublesome; his brand of unquestioning nationalism would keep violence alive as a policy option. Encouragement of freer discussion of Kosovo’s history, from medieval to modern, could help to reduce future tensions; the opening of the Serbian exclusivist history of Kosovo to non-Serbs could, in turn, boost non-Serbs’ openness to Serbian residents in and visitors to Kosovo. Detachment from the entrenched national view of history would be a long-term public project, but a more nuanced view of the nation’s ‘historical destiny’ would improve regional stability. Similar reconsideration among other Orthodox nations of the ex-Ottoman Balkans (Greeks, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Romanians), each with its own similar anti-Ottoman national legend, is also desirable, and is slowly gaining way.² Not only did NATO dithering during the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia result in part from uncertainty over which of Serbia’s actions history legitimated, but public sympathy with the Serbs evident in some neighbouring states also helped to undercut the sanctions adopted as a non-military means of restraining

¹ The text of the speech is at <http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/spch-kosovo1989.htm>.

² For stereotypes of Ottomans in Macedonian historiography and recent signs of change, see S. Troebst, ‘Das Osmanische Reich in der makedonischen Geschichtskultur’, *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen*, vi (2005), 62-70.

the combatants. The course of Serbian nationalistic policies in the 1990s hardly took place in a vacuum.

Perhaps Serbia's loss of full control over Kosovo, like the disastrous consequences to Iraq resulting from the invasion of Kuwait, will drive home the lesson that nationalist history cannot excuse brutal policies. Both policy-shapers and the general public, within and without the territories of the former empire, may realize more quickly that any time mention of the Ottoman era arises in discussion of current events, it is wiser to ignore the references, rather than to allow suspect assertions to cloud issues. Citation of the Ottoman past is a tell-tale mark of history as politics.

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