

## Demographic and Ethno-Religious Change in 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Ottoman Dobrudja (NE Balkans) and the Related Impact of Migrations

This essay examines the main aspects of demographic and ethno-religious change in Ottoman Dobrudja (NE Balkans) from the Ottoman conquest in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century till the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Paying due attention to Dobrudja's pre-Ottoman historical legacy, and utilizing an array of narrative and administrative sources, the essay discusses Dobrudja's turbulent political history during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the continuation of negative demographic trends that had developed in the pre-Ottoman centuries, such as outward migrations and demographic losses due to armed conflicts. The political stabilization of Dobrudja in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century led to a marked change in demographic trends, whereby from the late 15<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Dobrudja became the venue of inward migrations of Turcomans from Anatolia and Thrace and of Christians from other parts of the Balkans. The demographic growth and stabilization of Dobrudja in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is the subject of the second half of the essay, based on Ottoman tax registers and the attendant law-codes.

### *Introduction*

This essay takes up the task to discuss the demographic and ethno-religious development of the Balkan Peninsula's extreme northeast—the predominantly steppe land region of Dobrudja—during the first two centuries of Ottoman rule (i.e. in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries). The essay will place an emphasis on three interrelated processes during the region's development in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries—outbound migrations (predominantly of Christians) and population losses due to war, mostly during the turbulent 15<sup>th</sup> century; inbound migrations (predominantly of Turcomans) especially during the 16<sup>th</sup> century; and conversion to Islam, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

After a brief discussion of the region's main geographical characteristics and its history prior to the Ottoman conquest, the essay will feature two main parts. First, it will discuss the political history and the related demographic and ethno-religious development of Dobrudja at large from the Ottoman conquest in the late

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<sup>1</sup> See also GEORGIEVA 1999: 124-125.

14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, mostly on the basis of narrative sources, such as Ottoman, Byzantine, and western chronicles, travel accounts, and diplomatic correspondence. Special attention will be paid to the impact of armed conflicts, including the Ottoman conquest itself, the continuous struggle for regional dominance between the Ottomans and the Danubian principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia), and the Crusade of Varna (1444-1445). The 15<sup>th</sup> century witnessed Dobrudja's definitive incorporation into the Ottoman territorial-administrative system, whereby the region would come to constitute the core of the Ottoman province (*sancak/liva*) of Silistre (also Silistria, mod. Silistra on the Bulgarian shore of the Danube).<sup>2</sup> By the last third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman state was able to use the province (with its provincial governor based in the fortress of Silistre) as a vital frontier outpost from which it could better control the tribute-paying principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, as well as to launch major military campaigns against foreign enemies such as the Kingdom of Poland (after 1569, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) and, later, the Tsardom of Russia.

Thereafter, the essay will examine ethno-demographic and religious change in Dobrudja in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, mostly on the basis of Ottoman tax registers reflecting two tax registrations (1518/1530 and 1569) and the attendant Ottoman provincial law-codes, whereby one provincial district (or rather judgeship, *kaza*) will be taken as a case study—the capital judgeship of Silistre, which was also the largest and most populous in the province. In this part of the essay, special attention will be paid to Turcoman migration and colonization, the related development of the settlement network, and the importance of conversion (and converts) to Islam, whereby conversion to Islam could be seen as a direct consequence of Turcoman migration and colonization as well as the development of the province (with its capital Silistre) as an important frontier zone, which also related to the increased importation of enslaved prisoners of war many of whom would convert to Islam as a precondition for their manumission.

### *The geographical position and major ecological characteristics of Dobrudja*

The historical-geographical region of Dobrudja occupies the northeasternmost part of the Balkan Peninsula with a total area of 23,000 sq. km in modern Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>3</sup> It is enclosed between the Danube to the north and northwest, the Black Sea to the east, Provadiyska (or alternatively, Batova) river to the south,

<sup>2</sup> During the early modern period, the Ottoman province of Silistre usually also included some lands south of the Balkan range, which fall outside of the scope of this essay.

<sup>3</sup> With around 7,500 sq. km being part of modern northeastern Bulgaria, including all of the provinces of Dobrich and Silistra, as well as a part of Varna province, and the rest being situated in southeastern Romania, in the provinces of Constanța and Tulcea.

and the higher Ludogorie (Tr. Deliorman) plateau to the southwest. With a predominant altitude of 150-300 m and a low annual precipitation of around 400 mm, Dobrudja is largely a semi-arid steppe land plateau, with pockets of forest steppe.<sup>4</sup> It is usually seen as constituting the southwestern end of the Ponto-Caspian steppe—the vast steppe land stretching from the northwestern shores of the Black Sea through modern Moldova, southeastern Ukraine, the middle and lower Volga basin in Russia, and western Kazakhstan, where it borders the equally vast Kazakh steppe.<sup>5</sup> Dobrudja's physiographic and ecological characteristics have made it the “steppe land gate” to the Balkans, inviting numerous invasions of highly mobile nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples (particularly from the core Ponto-Caspian steppe to the northeast) through the centuries, which have had an instrumental impact on its history.

### *Pre-Ottoman Dobrudja*

Populated since the Paleolithic, Dobrudja had its oldest identifiable permanent settlements founded by the Getae (Dacians)<sup>6</sup> in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, mostly along the Danube and at natural crossroads in the region's interior. Greek colonization of Dobrudja's Black Sea coast in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> cc. BC resulted in the foundation of major port cities such as Tomis (mod. Constanța) and Callatis (mod. Mangalia). During the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, Dobrudja was controlled and contested by Getaean (Dacian) and Thracian kingdoms, the Macedonian Empire of Philip II and Alexander III the Great, as well as the Scythian Kingdom in the Ponto-Caspian steppe.<sup>7</sup> The Scythian influence gave the region the name Little Scythia (Gr. Mykra Skythia; Lat. Scythia Minor) as identified by Strabo (d. 24 AD).<sup>8</sup>

The region was formally incorporated into the Roman Empire only by 45 AD.<sup>9</sup> In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, Dobrudja experienced recurring and devastating Gothic invasions from the northeast, followed by a fresh round of invasions from the same direction in the 5<sup>th</sup> through the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries including, for the first time,

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<sup>4</sup> For a good overview of Dobrudja's physical geography, see FOL & DIMITROV 1984: 9-22.

<sup>5</sup> Whereby both the Ponto-Caspian and Kazakh steppes are seen as parts of the Eurasian steppe belt.

<sup>6</sup> According to some ancient authors as well as modern scholars the Dacians and the Getae were the same people, according to others, they were different, but related.

<sup>7</sup> For a good overview of Dobrudja's history prior to the Roman conquest, see TONEV & ZARCHEV, 1986: 13-22.

<sup>8</sup> STRABO 1924: 240-241; 272-273.

<sup>9</sup> TONEV & ZARCHEV 1986: 23-25; see also BOWMAN, CHAMPLIN & LINTOTT 1996: 558-573.

Turkic peoples such as the Huns, the Avars, and the Bulgars, as well as, notably, the (non-Turkic) Slavs.<sup>10</sup> It was in Dobrudja that some of the Bulgars carved out a new state on former Byzantine territory under the leadership of Asparukh in 681.<sup>11</sup> Thereafter, Dobrudja would repeatedly change hands between the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdoms (681-1018 and 1185-1393, respectively) and Byzantium. In the meantime, the decline and disintegration of the Khazar state in the central Ponto-Caspian steppe caused further invasions of Turkic peoples—Pechenegs and Uzes repeatedly raided the northeastern Balkans and beyond in the 10<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, while also serving occasionally as mercenaries in the medieval Bulgarian and Byzantine states.<sup>12</sup> From the late 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards Pechenegs and Uzes were replaced by the Cumans (Kipchaks), who repeatedly raided the Balkans too, but also played an instrumental role in the foundation of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in 1185 and in its subsequent history.<sup>13</sup> One should also consider the argument, based on archaeological findings, that starting from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, until around the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the northeastern Balkans suffered from low precipitation (or drought), which also contributed to the rapid depopulation of Dobrudja, leaving only several inhabited “islands”—the Dobrudjan Black Sea coast, Silistra and its hinterland, and the Danube delta.<sup>14</sup>

The Mongol invasions in eastern and central Europe and the emergence of the Golden Horde in 1242 quickly overshadowed the influence of Turkic peoples from the Ponto-Caspian steppe on Balkan historical developments. For a period of around a century (ca. 1242 to ca. 1342), the Golden Horde (or Kipchak Khanate) played an important role in Balkan, and especially Bulgarian history, whereby due to its geographic proximity, northeastern Bulgaria, and specifically Dobrudja, would be naturally most affected by Tatar influence.<sup>15</sup> This included direct Tatar (Golden Horde) interventions in Bulgarian internal affairs, especially in the years

<sup>10</sup> On the Gothic invasions in the Balkans, see KULIKOWSKI 2007: esp. 1-42; 71-143. On the invasions in the 5<sup>th</sup> through the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, see FINE, 1983: 25-73, and ÎNALCIK, “Dobrudja,” *EF*.

<sup>11</sup> For a concise overview of the different Bulgar states and specifically the foundation of the Bulgar state in the Balkans with its original core in the northeastern Balkans, see GOLDEN 1992: 244-258.

<sup>12</sup> See GOLDEN 1992: 243-244; 264-270, and DIACONU 1970.

<sup>13</sup> Cumans certainly played a prominent role in the restoration of Bulgarian statehood in 1185 and in the military of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. According to some scholars, the Asenid dynasty that presided over the foundation of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom was itself of Cuman descent, the Terter dynasty that ruled Bulgaria in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century was of Cuman origin, and the last dynasty of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, the Shishmanids, also likely had Cuman roots; see VÁSÁRY 2005: 13-56. See also DIACONU: 1978.

<sup>14</sup> ATANASOV 2009: 13-52.

<sup>15</sup> For a good discussion of Tatar influence in Bulgaria and the wider Balkans, see VÁSÁRY 2005: 69-133.

1282-1300 and repeated Tatar raids that lasted until the end of Tatar influence (marked by the death of Özbek Khan in 1342), some of these Tatar raids may have led to permanent Tatar settlement in Dobrudja.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most fascinating episodes related to the Tatar influence in the Balkans is the story of the purported migration of Anatolian Seljuk Turks to Dobrudja under the leadership of Sarı Saltık in the 1260s, in relation to the former Seljuk Sultan of Anatolia, Izz al-Din Kayka'us II's (r. 1246-1257) taking refuge first with the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1259-1282) ca. 1261 and later with the Khan of the Golden Horde Berke (r. 1257-1266) in the Crimea ca. 1264-1265, where Izz al-Din eventually died in 1280. While the story of Izz al-Din's sojourns in Constantinople and in the Crimea have been related in numerous contemporary and near-contemporary accounts,<sup>17</sup> the only source that presents the story of Sarı Saltık clearly and in considerable detail is *Tevarih-i Al-i Selçuk* ("History of the House of Seljuk") by Yazıcızade Ali, who composed the work for the Ottoman sultan Murad II in 1424.<sup>18</sup> According to Yazıcızade Ali's account, Izz al-Din, while being Michael VIII's guest ca. 1261 asked the Byzantine emperor for a place where his (Anatolian Turkish) followers could settle, as they (the Turks) could not live in a city for a long time. The emperor pointed to Dobrudja (this being the first use of the toponym in a historical source)<sup>19</sup> and in short time those followers of Izz al-Din Kayka'us migrated to Dobrudja being led by a popular Muslim mystic, Sarı Saltık, and founded there two or three towns together with 30-40 nomadic clan encampments (*obas*).<sup>20</sup> After Khan Berke sheltered Izz al-Din

<sup>16</sup> On the especially destructive raids in the 1270s which resulted in great political instability in Bulgaria, see PACHYMÉRÈS 1984-2000, vol. 2: 444-448; 548-552; 560-566; NIKOV 1929: 97-141, esp. 112-119. On Tatar raids in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, see KANTAKUZENOS 1982-2011, vol. 1: 132-135, LAIOU 1972: 281, and NIKOV 1929: 140. On Tatar settlement, see NIKOV 1929: 140.

<sup>17</sup> For example, in PACHYMÉRÈS 1984-2000, vol. 1: 300-312.

<sup>18</sup> YAZICIZADE ALİ 2009.

<sup>19</sup> YAZICIZADE ALİ 2009: 772. Yazıcızade Ali refers to "Dobruca ili" (the region of Dobrudja), the place name was most likely derived from Dobrotitsa, the second ruler of the Despotate of Dobrudja (r. 1347-1385), see discussion on the Despotate of Dobrudja below. It was common practice for the Ottomans (and others at the time) to name a newly conquered land after the name of its former ruler(s) or dynasty that controlled it at the time of the conquest. A confirmation of this is that as early as in 1390, the Wallachian *voevode* Mircea I the Elder (r. 1386-1394; 1397-1418) claimed the title "Despot of the lands of Dobrotitsa (Dobrodicius)" (*terrarum Dobrodicii Despotus*), HURMUZAKI 1887-1938, vol. 1, Pt. 2: 322. The memory of the region as specifically related to despot Dobrotitsa lasted well into the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the late Byzantine historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles (d. 1470) refers to Kaliakra and Varna as parts of "the lands of Dobrotitsa the Bulgarian" in his discussion of the Crusade of Varna (1444), CHALKOKONDYLES 2014, vol. 2: 76-77. See also the discussion on the Ottoman conquest of Dobrudja below.

<sup>20</sup> YAZICIZADE ALİ 2009: 772.

in the Crimea, he also purportedly transferred Sarı Saltık's Turks from Dobrudja to the Crimea, but those returned to Dobrudja some time later.<sup>21</sup> Many of them, bothered by Christian (esp. Bulgarian) princes, returned from Dobrudja to Karasi in northwestern Anatolia in the early decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century; those who did not, remained in Dobrudja and converted to Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

While some scholars have raised serious objections to the historicity of Yazıcızade Ali's account,<sup>23</sup> the latter's validity has been largely accepted among scholars of Ottoman history, above all thanks to the influential work of Paul Wittek who argued that not only did the migration happen, but also that the community of Christian Turks who populate parts of Dobrudja today, known as Gagauz, originated from this event, and that in fact, the modern ethnonym Gagauz itself has been derived from the name of sultan (Izz al-Din) Kayka'us.<sup>24</sup> While some additional corroborating evidence has also been adduced,<sup>25</sup> it should be noted that the actual demographic impact of the migration of Sarı Saltık's Turcomans is hard to gauge, especially as according to Yazıcızade's account, many of them returned to Anatolia.

The last major chapter in the history of pre-Ottoman Dobrudja was the formation of an autonomous, and later *de facto* independent principality that controlled most of Dobrudja, including the Black Sea coast (but usually excluding the fortress of Silistra and its hinterland). This entity is usually referred to as the Principality of Karbona/Karvuna (near mod. Balchik on the Black Sea) or the Despotate of Dobrudja. The earliest reference to it is found in John Kantakouzenos' *History*, in relation to the Byzantine civil war (1341-1347), whereby in 1346 Empress Anne of Savoy, the mother of the minor John V Palaiologos, sought the help of a certain Balik, the lord of Karbona (Karvuna); Balik sent his two brothers, Theodore and Dobrotitsa with 1,000 select troops to help the empress in her struggle against John Kantakouzenos (later John VI, r. 1347-1354).<sup>26</sup> Ivan Bozhilov has argued that Balik (d. 1347), or his father,

<sup>21</sup> YAZICIZADE ALI 2009: 853.

<sup>22</sup> YAZICIZADE ALI 2009: 873, 908.

<sup>23</sup> Most notably, MUTAFČIEV 1943. Mutafčiev was trained as a Byzantinist. He posed some important questions, such as whether Dobrudja was indeed under Byzantine control at the time (for the Byzantine emperor to point it as a place of refuge to Izz al-Din's Turcoman followers), and the silence of the contemporary Byzantine sources, especially Georges Pachymeres who must have resided in Constantinople at the time and would have taken note of the thousands of Turcomans making their way to the Balkans. It should be noted that at the time of the purported migration of Anatolian Turcomans to Dobrudja the latter was most likely under the formal, but in reality possibly only nominal, control of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom.

<sup>24</sup> WITTEK, 1951-1952, WITTEK 1952.

<sup>25</sup> KIEL 2000.

<sup>26</sup> KANTAKUZENOS 1982-2011, vol. 3: 389-390; FINE 1987: 367.

may have received parts of Dobrudja from the Bulgarian tsar (either Theodore Svetoslav, r. 1300-1321, or John II Terter, r. 1321-1322) as an appanage as early as ca. 1320-1321.<sup>27</sup> More recently, Georgi Atanasov tied the emergence of the *archontate* (and later *despotate*) of Karvuna to the transfer of Varna and Karvuna (and their hinterlands) from the jurisdiction of the Tărnovo Patriarchate to that of the Costantinopolitan Patriarchate by 1325, whereby it was held as a semi-autonomous domain by the Bulgarian despot Sratsimir (d. 1331), father of tsar John Alexander (r. 1331-1371), and then held by Sratsimir's widow Keratsa Petritsa, after which, following the latter's death, it was transferred by John Alexander to his relative Balik ca. 1340.<sup>28</sup> It was most probably during the period in which Balik had control over Dobrudja, that the region may have been, for the first time, attacked by Anatolian Turks. According to an epic authored in 1465 by the Ottoman poet and historian Enveri, Umur Bey, the ruler of the west Anatolian Turcoman maritime emirate of Aydın (r. 1334-1348), attacked with his fleet and pillaged parts of Dobrudja's Black Sea coast, up to Danube's delta, in 1341.<sup>29</sup> This attack, if it indeed took place, did not lead to any permanent conquest or settlement by Anatolian Turcomans.

The domain of Karvuna was expanded under Balik's brother Dobrotitsa (r. 1347-1385), whereby Dobrotitsa moved the capital to Kaliakra and ca. 1370 received the title *despot* from the Bulgarian tsar John Alexander (r. 1331-1371).<sup>30</sup> The *despotate* was inherited by Dobrotitsa's son Ivanko (Ioanko, Yanko) in 1385 who most likely held his domain until ca. 1390-1391 (see discussion on the Ottoman conquest below).<sup>31</sup> In his well-known memoirs, the Bavarian Johann Schiltberger (d. 1440), a participant in the Battle of Nicopolis (1396), would refer to the former domain of Dobrotitsa and Ivanko as one of the "three Bulgarias," with capital Kaliakra (the other two being the Bulgarian Kingdoms of Vidin and Tarnovo, respectively, which emerged after the death of Tsar John Alexander in 1371).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> TONEV & ZARCHEV 1986: 61-63.

<sup>28</sup> ATANASOV 2009: 67-71; 78-83. Atanasov also highlights the genealogical connections of Sratsimir and Balik's families to the Terterid dynasty.

<sup>29</sup> LEMERLE 1957: 129-143.

<sup>30</sup> GIUZELEV, 1981: 260-261.

<sup>31</sup> The most well-known historical source confirming Ivanko's tenure as despot is his treaty with Genoa concluded in 1387. See Latin original, with Bulgarian translation, in ZLATARSKI & KATSAROV 1911: 20-21; as well as EPSTEIN 2001: 244.

<sup>32</sup> SCHILTBERGER 1879: 39. The Kingdoms of Vidin and Tărnovo existed from John Alexander's death in 1371 and were governed by his sons John Sratsimir and John Shishman, respectively. Vidin was conquered by the Ottomans in 1396, and Tărnovo in 1393, see FINE 1987:367; 422-425.

*The Ottoman Conquest of Dobrudja (1388-1417)*

The Ottoman conquest of Dobrudja was a natural outgrowth of Ottoman territorial expansion in the Balkans since the Ottomans set foot in Gallipoli in 1352. From that point onwards, the Ottomans would follow a two-phase strategy of conquest, which included imposing Ottoman suzerainty on the rulers of the petty Balkan states, and (at the opportune political moment) direct annexation of territories.<sup>33</sup> While Ottoman expansion in the Balkans was facilitated by the political fragmentation of the peninsula, which weakened the Balkan states' potential for resistance, political actors outside of the Balkans (but with distinct interests in the region), such as Hungary, Venice, and in relation to the focus of this essay, especially the Danubian principality of Wallachia, played important roles in spearheading anti-Ottoman resistance.<sup>34</sup>

During the 1370s, following the Battle of Maritsa (1371) in which the Ottomans defeated a coalition of Serbian princes, most Balkan rulers, including the Byzantine emperor and the rulers of the "Three Bulgarias" (the rulers of the Bulgarian kingdoms (or tsardoms) of Vidin and Tarnovo, and the Despot of Dobrudja), accepted Ottoman suzerainty. By the mid-1380s the Ottomans had established direct control over much of the Peninsula south of the Balkan range and east of Serbia. After the Ottomans were stopped at Plochnik (mod. southeastern Serbia) by the Serbian despot Lazar in 1387, Sultan Murad I (r. 1362-1389) summoned his Balkan vassals in preparation for a military response. However, according to the chronicle of Mehmed Neşri (d. ca. 1520), two of these—the tsar of Tărnovo John Shishman (Sosmanoz) and the "son of Dobrotitsa" (Dobrucaoğlu), i.e. the despot of Dobrudja Ivanko—disobeyed, which prompted Murad to send his vizier Çandarlı Ali Pasha with a large army to subdue John Shishman.<sup>35</sup> During his 1388 campaign in the northeastern Balkans, Ali Pasha conquered a number of fortresses in the Kingdom of Tarnovo, which were returned to John Shishman as the latter renewed his submission to the Ottoman sultan and promised to surrender the fortress of Silistre, to which Murad appointed Timurtaşoğlu Yahşi Bey as the first Ottoman commander at the end of the campaign.<sup>36</sup> As for the Despotate

<sup>33</sup> The best work on early Ottoman territorial expansion is still İNALCIK 1954.

<sup>34</sup> The principalities of Wallachia (roughly, modern central and southern Romania) and Moldavia (roughly, mod. Moldova), appeared as new political entities by the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of the progressive weakening of the Golden Horde.

<sup>35</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 111-112.

<sup>36</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 115-117. Neşri reports that John Shishman changed his mind about handing Silistre over to the Ottomans, but in the end was forced to submit. See also Kiel's insightful analysis in KIEL 1994.



of Dobrudja, while in the course of his campaign in the lands of John Shishman, Ali Pasha sent Timurtaşoğlu Yahşi Bey to subdue Varna (Ivanko's capital at the time), that attempt proved unsuccessful.<sup>37</sup> Thus, as far as Dobrudja is concerned, Ali Pasha's campaign in 1388 resulted in the conquest of Silistra, but the greater part of the region (the Despotate of Dobrudja) avoided Ottoman annexation.

Ottoman control of Silistra did not last long, however. By 1390, the prince of Wallachia, Mircea the Elder (r. 1386-1394; 1397-1418), taking advantage of Bayezid I's (r. 1389-1402) being occupied in Anatolia and the weakening of Ivanko's power (following Ali Pasha's 1388 campaign), managed to conquer both Silistra and the Despotate of Dobrudja, whereby in 1390-1391 Mircea styled himself "despot of the lands of Dobrotitsa and lord of Silistria" (*terrarum Dobrodicii despotus et Tristri dominus*) and this could be seen as the end of Ivanko's reign as despot of Dobrudja.<sup>38</sup> The events of the next several years are somewhat difficult to date precisely as sources differ,<sup>39</sup> but it is certain that Mircea launched a successful attack against the Ottoman *akıncı* (light cavalry raider forces) base at Karınovası (mod. Karnobat, west of mod. Burgas, just south of Dobrudja) ca. 1393, which prompted a response from Bayezid I who paused his campaigns in Anatolia to cross the Danube at Nicopolis and encounter Mircea at the Battle of Argeş/Rovine in 1394 (or 1395), whereafter the Wallachian voevode (be it Mircea, or Vlad I) also accepted to pay tribute to Bayezid.<sup>40</sup> The Battle of Rovine/Argeş (1394 and/or 1395) could be seen as the point at which the Ottomans established control over Dobrudja, at least for the time being.<sup>41</sup> Bayezid's victory over the

<sup>37</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 114-115.

<sup>38</sup> HURMUZAKI 1887-1938, vol. 1, Pt. 2: 322, 334 (documents No. 257 (dated 1390) and No. 275 (1391)).

<sup>39</sup> Specifically, Ottoman chronicles from the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century, such as those of Neşri and Oruç Bey, date events two to three years earlier compared to non-Ottoman sources. I will give the most widely agreed upon dates in the modern scholarly literature.

<sup>40</sup> Ottoman chronicles tend to give 1391 or 1392 as the year of Mircea's attack on Karınovası, with the Battle of Argeş taking place shortly afterwards. Neşri also asserts that Mircea was already an Ottoman tribute payer prior to his attack on Karınovası and that he submitted again to Bayezid I after being defeated at Argeş. See NEŞRİ 2008: 143-144, as well as Oruç Bey's somewhat less detailed account, ORUÇ BEY 2014: 31-32. According to the most widely accepted sequence of events, Mircea's attack on Karınovası took place in 1393, and the Battle of Rovine/Argeş, on May 17, 1395; persuasive arguments for an October 10, 1394 dating of the battle have been presented too. Some scholars have argued that two separate battles, one at "Rovine" and one at "Argeş," took place in 1394 and 1395 respectively. Also, while Ottoman sources do not mention this, other sources relate that after the Battle of Argeş/Rovine, Bayezid I installed Vlad I (r. 1394-1397, or 1395-1396) as the new *voevode* of Wallachia, whereby Mircea took the office back in 1397 (or 1396). For an analysis and evaluation of the sources and a more detailed discussion of the dating of events, see GEMIL 2009: 103-115, and PANAITTE 2002: 112-113.

<sup>41</sup> But see also an interpretation arguing that the fortress of Kaliakra (and by association, much of Dobrudja) was already under Ottoman control by 1393, TONEV & ZARCHEV 1986: 68.

crusading army led by the Hungarian king Sigismund in 1396 at Nicopolis further strengthened Ottoman control over the northeastern Balkans and ended the existence of the last medieval Bulgarian state, the Kingdom of Vidin.

The Ottoman defeat in the hands of Timur at Ankara in 1402 brought about radical changes to the political situation in the Balkans and Anatolia. While Timur did not annex Ottoman territories, he restored the Anatolian Turcoman principalities recently conquered by Bayezid to their rulers and, following the Turco-Mongol principles of succession, divided the rest (i.e. the “core” Ottoman lands) among three of Bayezid’s sons, which marked the beginning of a long civil war (1402-1413).<sup>42</sup> While the Ottoman dynasty formally kept most of its Balkan domains, most of its Balkan vassals (including Byzantium) regained their independence, and would also interfere in the struggles among the sons of Bayezid.<sup>43</sup> The latter was especially valid for Mircea the Elder who played a prominent role in the Ottoman civil war and the years immediately following, by backing different Ottoman clients, and also took advantage of Ottoman weakness to directly annex territories south of the Danube, especially in the northeastern Balkans. Having secured the good graces of both Poland and Hungary in 1403,<sup>44</sup> Mircea went on to (re-)conquer Dobrudja (including Silistra) and likely some territories further west along the south bank of the Danube by 1404. Having successfully withstood an Ottoman attack on Silistria in 1405 (or possibly 1406),<sup>45</sup> in a deed dated 23 November 1406, Mircea styled himself “the great *voevode* and ruler of all the land of Ugrovlachia, and of those parts beyond the mountains... and of both sides of Podunavia [i.e. the lands along the Danube] up to the Great Sea, and lord of the citadel of Dârstor [Silistra].”<sup>46</sup> He maintained his claims to those territorial gains south of the Danube throughout the Ottoman civil war and beyond,<sup>47</sup> until Mehemmed I’s expedition of 1417 (see below), which forced him to recognize Ottoman

<sup>42</sup> On Turco-Mongol principles of succession, which entailed the partitioning of the patrimonium into appanages (*uluses*) among the sons of the deceased ruler, as well as on the evolving Ottoman principle of unigeniture (which was at odds with the Turco-Mongol tradition), see ÎNALCIK 1993. On the Ottoman interregnum, see KASTRITSIS 2007.

<sup>43</sup> A notable exception was the Serbian despot Stephen Lazarević, who remained an Ottoman vassal. See also DENNIS 1967.

<sup>44</sup> For Mircea’s 1403 letter to Władysław II of Poland, see HURMUZAKI 1887-1938 vol. 1, Pt. 2: 824-825 (document No. 652). On Mircea’s contemporary attainment of the support of the Hungarian king Sigismund, as well as of that of the Serbian despot Stephen Lazarević and Constantine, the son of the last Bulgarian ruler of Vidin, see PAPACOSTEA 1986: 24.

<sup>45</sup> PAPACOSTEA 1986: 26.

<sup>46</sup> OȚETEA ET AL. 1966: 70 (doc. No. 32); see also doc. No. 28, provisionally dated 1404-1406, in which the same titles are employed for Mircea, OȚETEA ET AL. 1966: 63-64

<sup>47</sup> See letters and deeds issued by Mircea in 1409, and 1415, in which he maintains the same territorial claims as in the deed of 1406, adding also the title “master of many Turkish towns;” OȚETEA ET AL. 1966: 75-77, 80-81 (documents Nos. 35 and 38).

suzerainty and become an Ottoman tribute payer once again. During the period in which Mircea claimed, and likely controlled (most of) Dobrudja, i.e. from ca. 1404 to 1417, he interfered actively in Ottoman affairs by launching his Ottoman clients to the south of the Danube, following a common pattern that included the co-operation of anti-Ottoman forces in Anatolia, specifically the lord of Sinop on the Anatolian Black Sea coast (the principality of İsfendiyaroğulları). First it was one of Bayezid's sons, prince Musa, who was released by the lord of Sinop (with the support of the ruler of Karaman) and dispatched by ship to Mircea in Wallachia in 1409, whereby the Wallachian *voevode* gave him one of his daughters in marriage and provided him with the needed military support.<sup>48</sup> Having crossed the Danube into Ottoman Rumelia via Silistra in 1410, Musa managed to eliminate his brother Süleyman Çelebi in 1411, and claimed control over most of the Ottoman Balkans until 1413 when he was defeated by his brother Mehmed which would bring the Ottoman civil war to an end.<sup>49</sup> In 1415, the last surviving son of Bayezid (other than Mehmed), Mustafa, likewise made it to Wallachia by ship via Sinop,<sup>50</sup> and crossed the Danube to lead a rebellion against his brother Mehmed I (r. 1413-1421) in 1416.<sup>51</sup> In the same year, Sheykh Bedreddin, the eminent jurist, theologian, and mystic, who had served as military judge (*kadiasker*) to prince Musa (1411-1413), arrived in Wallachia via Sinop and likewise crossed the Danube, likely with Mircea's support,<sup>52</sup> to raise the banner of rebellion in Deliorman and Dobrudja (while two of his disciples started similar rebellions in northwestern Anatolia).<sup>53</sup> While Mustafa fled into Byzantine custody and Bedreddin's rebellion was suppressed by the end of the year, the crisis of 1416 made the need to bring Mircea to submission urgent. The following year, 1417, Mehmed I led a large expedition across the Danube, which forced Mircea to submit and accept the payment of tribute.<sup>54</sup> With this, (most of) Dobrudja came under the more or

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed account, see NEŞRİ 2008: 220-223; as well as CHALKOKONDYLES 2014, vol. 1: 280-281; much less detailed accounts in ORUÇ BEY 2014: 42, and AŞIKPAŞAZADE 2013: 111.

<sup>49</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 224-240; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 42-45.

<sup>50</sup> Mustafa's arrival in Wallachia in June, 1415 has been documented, see OȚETEA ET AL. 1966: 81-82 (doc. No. 38). Chalkokondyles emphasizes that Mustafa "spent quite some time" in Wallachia, enjoying Mircea's support; CHALKOKONDYLES 2014, vol. 1: 334-335.

<sup>51</sup> DOUKAS 1975: 123.

<sup>52</sup> BALIVET 1995: 82; İNALCIK, "Dobrudja," *EF*.

<sup>53</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 251-253; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 47-49. On Bedreddin's disciples rebellion in Anatolia, see also DOUKAS 1975: 120-121. A good modern study on Bedreddin and his revolt is BALIVET 1995.

<sup>54</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 248; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 47; AŞIKPAŞAZADE 2013: 119-120; for the account of Şükrullah's (d. ca. 1450), see the Ottoman history section of his *Behçetü'l-Tevârih*, as published in ATŞİZ 1949: 61. Ottoman chroniclers report that in the course of the campaign Mehmed I repaired the fortresses of Sakçı (Isaccea) and Yenısala (Enisala), and built the fortress of

less stable control of the Ottoman state, but, as will be discussed below, Ottoman dominance would be challenged over the next several decades. Be it as it may, the numerous military campaigns and revolts in the northeastern Balkans during the period of establishment of Ottoman rule (ca. 1388-ca. 1417) must have led to further demographic losses, including the possible migration of Christians to the north of the Danube.<sup>55</sup>

### *Challenges to Ottoman Control over Dobruđja (1417-1462)*

While Mehmed I's campaign in 1417 essentially brought Dobruđja under Ottoman control, the Ottoman state had to withstand repeated challenges to its control in the region, which related to both the ambitions of Wallachian *voevodes* to restore their rule to the south of the Danube and the interests of great European powers in the Balkans which aimed at undermining Ottoman control in the peninsula. In this relation it is worth noting that in the next several decades, the Ottoman state and Hungary would be in direct competition over the appointment of the *voevode* of Wallachia (each of the two great powers striving to install their candidate). Dobruđja also became the theatre of war of the last great anti-Ottoman crusading campaign—the Crusade of Varna (1443-1445). Within this framework, this section will briefly discuss three main challenges to Ottoman control in Dobruđja—the campaigns of the Wallachian *voevodes* Dan II in the 1420s and Vlad III Țepeș in 1461-1462, as well as the Crusade of Varna (1443-1445) in between. While the 1420s events probably affected only Silistre and its vicinity, the Crusade of Varna and Vlad III's actions had a much stronger impact on Dobruđja's demographic and socio-economic development as attested by contemporary sources.

The 1420s were a period of acute instability in Wallachian history, marked by the ceaseless competition between the Ottoman state and Hungary over the lower Danube basin, whereby the Wallachian princely throne changed hands numerous times between the Hungarian-backed claimant Dan II (r. 1420-1431, with four interruptions, during which Radu II reigned) and the Ottoman-backed Radu II (r. 1420-1427, with three interruptions). When Radu II was evicted from the throne in late 1422 and was replaced by Dan II, the Ottomans launched a campaign beyond the Danube into Wallachia, which was repulsed by a counteroffensive led by the count of Timish Pippo d'Ozera (d'Osere) and Dan II and included Dan

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Yergögi (Giurgiu). The dating of this campaign has been disputed too, 1417 being the most widely accepted dating; some scholars, notably İnalçik and some Romanian historians during the communist regime, place Mehmed I's campaign in 1419, during the reign of Mircea's successor, Michael I (r. 1418-1420), 1416 and 1420 have also been seen as possible datings; see PANAITIE 2002: 114; GEMIL 2009: 137-140; and İNALCIK, Dobruđja, *EF*.

<sup>55</sup> See DIMITROV, ZHECHEV, & TONEV 1988: 15-16.

II's destructive attack on Silistre and d'Ozera's on Vidin, followed by another Ottoman offensive beyond the Danube.<sup>56</sup> The next several years were dominated by increasing tensions between the Ottomans and Hungary, and included Ottoman attempts to depose Dan II (and eliminate Hungarian influence in Wallachia) in 1424 and 1425, the Hungarian king Sigismund's attempt to organize a broad crusading coalition in 1425-1426, with no crusade materializing, and finally, Dan II's defeat by Ottoman-backed Radu II in late May, 1426.<sup>57</sup> At this point, Pippo d'Ozera intervened again, and just like in 1422-1423, attacked Vidin, while Dan II crossed the Danube to attack Silistre.<sup>58</sup> In the end, in January 1427, Dan II was replaced by Radu II with strong boyar support.<sup>59</sup>

The Crusade of Varna (1443-1445) was the last large-scale crusading effort that aimed at driving the Ottomans out of Europe.<sup>60</sup> It was precipitated by the stabilization and expansion of Ottoman rule in the Balkans in the 1420s and 1430s,<sup>61</sup> and was made politically feasible by Byzantium's acceptance of the union of Latin and Greek churches under the Pope's ecclesiastical primacy at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439).<sup>62</sup> The main campaign of the crusade took place in the autumn of 1444,<sup>63</sup> whereby a large land army led by the new king of Hungary and Poland Władysław III Jagiełło, the *voevode* of Transylvania John Hunyadi, and the papal legate cardinal Juliano Cesarini, advanced from Hungary, crossed the Danube at Orșova, conquered Vidin, and after unsuccessfully besieging Nicopolis (Niğbolu), turned south toward the old Bulgarian capital of Tărnovo and further east through southern Deliorman and Dobrudja, sacking Shumnu (mod. Shumen), Novi Pazar, and other fortresses, bringing a lot of havoc and destruction along the

<sup>56</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 265; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 53. The exact chronology and sequence of events is difficult to establish as sources differ. See, GEMIL 2009: 144-146, and PERVAİN 1983-1984: 90-93.

<sup>57</sup> GEMIL 2009: 149-150.

<sup>58</sup> See a Venetian document, dated Oct. 9, 1526, praising the two allies' actions, HURMUZAKI 1887-1937, vol. 8: 4, and also GEMIL 2009: 150-151, PERVAİN 1983-1984: 104-106. One important consideration behind this campaign was the Hungarian court's intention to carve out a client state centered in Vidin, which would be headed by Fruzhin, the son of the last Bulgarian tsar of Tărnovo, John Shishman; see PLEŞA & ANDREESCU 1974: 548-549.

<sup>59</sup> GEMIL 2009: 151.

<sup>60</sup> For a good short overview of the Crusade of Varna, its major campaigns, and the most important related contemporary sources, see Imber's "Introduction" in IMBER 2006: 1-39; see also CHASIN 1989: 276-310.

<sup>61</sup> This included Wallachia's growing dependence on the Ottoman state and the Ottoman annexation of the Despotate of Serbia in 1438-1439; see IMBER 1990: 100-102, 115-119.

<sup>62</sup> On the Council of Ferrara-Florence, see GEANAKOPOLOS 1955: 324-346, and GILL 1959.

<sup>63</sup> This campaign was preceded by an ill-timed expedition in the late autumn and winter of 1443-1444, which advanced through Serbia and Bulgaria till the crusaders were stopped at the Zlatitsa pass in Ottoman Bulgaria; see IMBER 2006: 16-17.

way before reaching the Black Sea coast in early November, whereby, according to Andreas de Palatio, a papal collector and participant in the campaign, the crusaders took Varna, Galata, Kaliakra, and Kavarna along the Dobrudja coast<sup>64</sup>. They were ultimately defeated at Varna by the Ottoman army led by Murad II on November 10, 1444 whereafter the surviving crusaders fled through Dobrudja in search for safety to the north of the Danube.<sup>65</sup> Importantly, Murad II who had emerged out of retirement in Anatolia to face the grave challenge, managed to cross the Straits without being stopped by the crusading fleet, consisting of Papal, Venetian, and Burgundian vessels. The fleet remained in Constantinople in the winter of 1444-1445, and after spending much of the late spring and summer plundering ships and coastal settlements in the Black Sea to cover expenses, sailed to the Danube delta and upstream the river to meet Hunyadi who had promised to wait with a newly assembled land army at Nicopolis in late September, 1445. Along the way, the fleet, led by Cardinal Condulmer and the Burgundian commander Waleran de Wavrin—to whom we owe the most detailed account of the campaign<sup>66</sup>—attacked a number of Ottoman fortresses on both banks of the river; while Silistre proved too well fortified for the crusading fleet to conquer it in mid-August, Condulmer and de Wavrin succeeded in plundering and burning Tutrakan, Giurgiu, and Rus (Ruschuk, mod. Ruse) on their way to meet Hunyadi's army.<sup>67</sup> In the end, while Hunyadi did arrive and crossed the Danube in late September, he retreated after several inconclusive skirmishes with Ottoman forces, which spelled the end of the crusade.

The land campaign in 1444 and the naval expedition along the Danube the following year certainly had a strong impact on the demographic development of Dobrudja. For one, the fresh round of warfare along the route of the land army in 1444 and along the Danube in 1445 led to further human losses and depopulation. Recounting his retreat from Varna to the Danube through (eastern) Dobrudja, Andreas de Palatio points out that he was passing through desert-like land in which one could not find anything to eat or drink, to say nothing of finding a guide from among the local population.<sup>68</sup> As Str. Dimitrov has argued, the desolate state of Dobrudja as described by de Palatio could be attributed not only to the immediate

<sup>64</sup> IMBER 2006: 28-29; DE PALATIO 1891: 461-463 (Document No. 308). On de Palatio's status and role, see SETTON 1978: 86, 89.

<sup>65</sup> See IMBER 2006: 27-31.

<sup>66</sup> Waleran de Wavrin's memoirs were the main source used by his uncle, the chronicler Jehan de Wavrin (d. ca. 1474), who included an account of the Crusade of Varna in his *Anciennes Chroniques d'Angleterre*. This part of the *Anciennes Chroniques* was also published separately: DE WAVRIN 1927, and in English translation, DE WAVRIN 2006.

<sup>67</sup> DE WAVRIN 2006: 141-158.

<sup>68</sup> DE PALATIO 1891: 467-468.

impact of the Crusade of Varna, but also to the legacy of the military campaigns of the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and the possibility that some of the Christian inhabitants of Dobrudja likely migrated beyond the Danube into Wallachia as Mehmed I established control over Dobrudja ca. 1417.<sup>69</sup>

That such migrations were not unusual and could also be quite sizeable and impactful is attested by Jehan de Wavrin in his account of the Danubian campaign in 1445. Recounting the crusaders' arrival at Roussico (Rus, Ruschuk, mod. Ruse), de Wavrin tells the story of thousands of Bulgarian Christians who, at the sight of the crusader galleys and the *voevode* of Wallachia Vlad II Dracul (r. 1436-1442; 1443-1447) who accompanied them, declared their desire to cross the Danube and settle in Wallachia to escape from living "in subjection to the Turks."<sup>70</sup> "Now the Lord of Wallachia had a broad and spacious country, sparsely populated in some of its territories, and he gladly acceded to their request, receiving them liberally as his subjects."<sup>71</sup> Vlad II crossed the Danube with his troops to help the fugitives who were being pursued by Ottoman troops trying to prevent their escape. In the end, "at least twelve thousand people—men, women, and children—together with their baggage and animals" crossed the Danube into Wallachia.<sup>72</sup> However, upon Murad II's insistence, Vlad II had to return 4,000 of them as a part of the peace settlement following the crusading campaign.<sup>73</sup>

The last major challenge with significant demographic impact that the Ottomans faced in Dobrudja in the 15<sup>th</sup> century relates to the rebellion of the Wallachian *voevode* Vlad III Țepeș (or the Impaler) (r. 1448; 1456-1462; 1476). Vlad had stopped paying tribute to the Ottomans in 1459, claiming, according to Ottoman chroniclers, that the high expenses and efforts that defending his land from Hungarian attacks required rendered it impossible for him to report to Istanbul and/or to pay tribute.<sup>74</sup> When, according to Ottoman chroniclers, Vlad III asked Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446; 1451-1481) to procure military support, the sultan sent the governor of Niğbolu Çakırcıbaşı Hamza Bey with his troops in late 1461, but Hamza Bey was treacherously attacked and apprehended by Vlad III.<sup>75</sup> The Wallachian *voevode* proceeded to invade the Ottoman lands beyond the Danube between Nicopolis and Isaccea, inflicting huge demographic losses, which amounted, according to

<sup>69</sup> DIMITROV, ZHECHEV & TONEV: 15-16.

<sup>70</sup> DE WAVRIN 2006: 158.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>73</sup> DIMITROV, ZHECHEV & TONEV: 16.

<sup>74</sup> TURSUN BEY 1977: 111.

<sup>75</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 334; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 103; AŞIKPAŞAZADE 2013: 227. The Byzantine chronicler Chalkokondyles claims that Hamza Bey had been sent by Mehmed II to catch Vlad III by cunning; CHALKOKONDYLES 2014, vol. 2: 370-373.

a letter he sent to the Hungarian king in February, 1462, to 23,884, Turks and Bulgarians alike,<sup>76</sup> including the Ottoman governors of Nicopolis Hamza Bey and of Silistre, Yunus Bey.<sup>77</sup> Mehmed II's great expedition against Vlad III later the same year secured the latter's deposition and replacement with Radu the Fair (r. 1462-1473; 1473-1474; 1474-75).<sup>78</sup> 1462 has been considered a turning point in Wallachian-Ottoman relations, the year in which "Wallachia effectively entered the orbit of Ottoman power and for a long time ceased to be the active factor in the anti-Ottoman coalition, as it has previously been."<sup>79</sup> As for Dobrudja, this meant that the region would hardly be the target of destructive attacks from across the Danube for centuries to come.<sup>80</sup> However, demographic recovery would not come quickly—three decades after de Palatio made his observations about the desert-like Dobrudja, Donado de Lecce would use the same vocabulary to describe the region when he passed through it in 1475, and Giovanni Maria Angioiello (d. 1525) would do the same when recounting (in his *Historia Turchesca*) Mehmed II's campaign against Moldavia in 1476 during which the sultan and his army passed through Dobrudja.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Dobrudja and the Sancak of Silistre in the Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century*

The last third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (roughly from 1462 onwards) marked the definitive stabilization and maturation of Ottoman rule in Dobrudja. These decades included the further expansion of effective Ottoman influence to the northeast, bringing Moldavia and the Crimean Khanate into the Ottoman orbit, and the rise of the *sancak* (province) of Silistre, and especially its capital as an important foreground for Ottoman military campaigns to the north—against Poland, and much later, in the direction of Russia.

In the 1470s and 1480s, the Ottoman state succeeded in completing Mehmed II's ambitious Pontic strategy, which aimed at establishing Ottoman control over the Black Sea basin, turning the Black Sea into an "Ottoman lake." The major challenge the Ottomans had to overcome in the lower Danube/northwest Black

<sup>76</sup> The letter is published in IORGA 1925: 166-170. Importantly, although this number must be exaggerated, the Ottoman chronicler Oruç Bey largely confirms it, saying that Vlad III's victims amounted to "more than 20,000," ORUÇ BEY 2014: 104.

<sup>77</sup> While Neşri does not specify Yunus Bey's position, İbn Kemal (d. 1536) clarifies that he was governor of Silistre; NEŞRİ 2008: 334; İBN KEMAL 1957: 205-206.

<sup>78</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 334-335; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 103.

<sup>79</sup> GEMIL 2009: 199-200; see also PANAITE 2002: 114-115.

<sup>80</sup> The Wallachian *voevode* Michael the Brave's invasion to the south of the Danube in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century being the sole exception that proves the rule.

<sup>81</sup> ATANASOV 2009: 30.



Sea basin was the resistance of the prominent Moldavian *voevode* Stephen III the Great (r. 1457-1504), whose stature and role vis-à-vis the Ottomans is comparable to Mircea the Elder of Wallachia almost a century earlier. Having paid tribute to the Ottomans since his enthronement in 1457,<sup>82</sup> Stephen revolted in 1473, having recently established relations with the Akkoyunlu sovereign Uzun Hasan—Mehmed II’s great rival to the east—and already playing an important role in Wallachian politics, rivaling the Ottomans’ influence.<sup>83</sup> Following his great victory against the Ottomans at the Battle of Vaslui in January, 1475, Stephen was looking forward to possibly intervening in the ongoing struggle for the throne in the Crimean Khanate. This was one of the main reasons that prompted Mehmed II to dispatch Ahmed Gedik Pasha to conquer Genoese Caffa (Tr. Kefe) in the Crimea and secure the Crimean Khanate’s acceptance of Ottoman suzerainty in June, 1475. While Mehmed II won a major victory against Stephen in 1476 at Valea Albă, he could not fully capitalize on it; after prolonged negotiations, the two sides concluded a provisional peace treaty in 1480-1481, with Moldavia resuming payment of tribute.<sup>84</sup> This peace was followed by a more comprehensive treaty in 1486, following Bayezid II’s capture of the Moldavian fortresses Kiliya (Kili) at the Danube delta and Akkirman (Cetatea Albă, mod. Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi) on the right bank of the Dniester in 1484,<sup>85</sup> thus securing the direct overland connection between Ottoman Dobrudja and the vassal Crimean Khanate and bringing the northwest Pontic basin under full Ottoman control.<sup>86</sup>

In parallel and dialogue with these developments, Ottoman Dobrudja became reasonably well integrated within the Ottoman provincial administrative-territorial system as the core territory of the Ottoman *sancak* (province) of Silistre. We do not know much about the administrative development of the province of Silistre prior to the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, when the area was still seen and administered by the Ottoman state as a frontier zone (*uc*), without well-developed provincial administrative structures. Ottoman chroniclers state that there were Ottoman warriors (*gazis*) in the city in 1422 at the time of the Wallachian *voevode* Dan II’s attack, but it is not clear whether the city was the seat of an Ottoman governor.<sup>87</sup> In 1433, the Burgundian traveler Bertrandon de la Brocquière was informed, in a meeting with the Serbian despot George Branković, that the Ottomans had only one “captain” to the east of Vidin who defended the frontier from Wallachia to the Black Sea;<sup>88</sup> and most likely

<sup>82</sup> Moldavia had started paying tribute to the Ottomans in 1455; PANAITE 2002: 116.

<sup>83</sup> GEMIL 2009: 202- 203.

<sup>84</sup> GEMIL 2009: 205-208.

<sup>85</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 376; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 120.

<sup>86</sup> PANAITE 2002: 116.

<sup>87</sup> NEŞRİ 2008: 265; ORUÇ BEY 2014: 53.

<sup>88</sup> DE LA BROCQUIÈRE 1807: 276.

this “captain” (or governor) was stationed at Niğbolu.<sup>89</sup> When the crusading fleet passed by Silistre along the Danube in the summer of 1445, it chose not to attack the city as the crusaders had learned that the city had 30,000 troops assembled in it from all of Bulgaria;<sup>90</sup> this may be seen as a sign of the greater military and strategic significance that the city may have attained by the time, but again, it is not a clear proof of Silistre’s being the seat of a separate *sancak*. The earliest clear reference to an Ottoman provincial governor residing in Silistre is in relation to the already mentioned events of 1461-1462 when Vlad III murdered the governor of Silistre Yunus Bey. From the late 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards the governors of Silistre are often mentioned in Ottoman chronicles and administrative documents, often in relation to Ottoman military campaigns against Poland and Russia.

The earliest administrative documentation that sheds (tentative) light on the geographical extent and administrative structure of the *sancak* of Silistre are two accounting registers for the collection of the poll-tax (*cizye*) 894 AH/1488-1489 AD and 896 AH/1490-1491 AD, according to which the *sancak* of Silistra included the districts (*vilayets*) of “Silistre, Pravadi, Madara, Varna, Pedriç, Şumnu, and Gerilova, Ahyolu and others” (roughly) to the north of the Balkan range, and a number of others to the south of the Balkan Mountains.<sup>91</sup> Importantly, it renders unclear the issue of the administrative organization of northern Dobrudja as no district centers to the north of Varna are mentioned; in addition, the districts of Şumnu and Gerilova (Gerlovo) were sometimes listed as pertaining the province (*sancak*) of Niğbolu in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they were systematically included in that province. As it will be explained in detail in the next section, it was only from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, that all of Dobrudja was clearly included in administrative districts that were part of the province of Silistre.

### *Major Aspects of Dobrudja’s Demographic Development in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*

After this discussion of the broader historical development of Dobrudja from the Ottoman conquest in the late 14<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> century, this section will focus

<sup>89</sup> See IMBER 1990: 96, DIMITROV, ZHECHEV & TONEV: 10.

<sup>90</sup> DE WAVRIN 2006: 142.

<sup>91</sup> These two “registers” are in essence accounting balance sheets, as they contain only very general information about household numbers and the collected *cizye* revenues from various districts, their function also being to confirm that the tax has indeed been collected by the authorized Ottoman tax-collectors. For the 894 AH/1488-1489 AD register (including a full transliteration), see BARKAN 1964. For a Bulgarian translation of the register from 896 AH/1490-1491 AD, see VELKOV 1966, for the province of Silistre, see pages 25-27; for an analysis of this register, see TODOROV 1959. An undated law-code from the reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512) mentions the ports of Varna, Balçık, Kaliakra, Köstence, and Mangaliya as recently added to the province of Silistre; AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 2: 506; see also POPESCU, “The Region of Dobrudja under Ottoman Rule,” 14, GRADEVA 2004: 33.

on Dobrudja's demographic and socio-economic history during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. While the 16<sup>th</sup> century was not nearly as "eventful" for Dobrudja as the preceding century or so of Ottoman rule, it is the first for which we possess comprehensive tax registers<sup>92</sup> for the province of Silistre, which allow for a detailed analysis regarding population movements, population growth as well as ethno-demographic and religious change in general.

### *The Sources*

As mentioned in the introduction, the following analysis of demographic and ethno-religious change in Dobrudja in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is based on two tax registrations—from 1518/1530 and 1569, respectively. The first registration is originally contained in a tax register for the province (*sancak/liva*) of Silistre, dated Ramazan 924 AH/September 1518 AD, i.e. from the late reign of Selim I. Due to the poor condition of this register, a larger register dated 937 AH/1530 AD, whose essential tax payer and taxation data for the province of Silistre has been copied from the 1518 register, will be used.<sup>93</sup> The 1518/1530 registration covers Dobrudja in three judgeships (*kazas*)—Hırsova (mod. Hârşova, Romania), which essentially included northern Dobrudja, enclosed between the Danube to the west and north, the Black Sea to the east, and the Karasu valley (roughly the line from Boğazköy (mod. Cernavodă, Romania) to (slightly to the north of) the harbor of Köstence (mod. Constanța, Romania). Southern Dobrudja was divided between the judgeships of Silistre to the west, which included the (right) Danubian bank from Silistre to Kuzgun Pınarı (mod. Ion Corvin, Romania), and that of Varna to the east, which included the Black Sea coast from Köstence to the Kamçı (Kamchia) river.<sup>94</sup> Depending on how one defines the southern borders of Dobrudja, the judgeship of Pravadi (mod. Provadiya), to the south of that of Silistre and the southwest of Varna, also contained a small part of Dobrudja.

The 1518/1530 tax registration is synoptic (*icmal*)—it contains only summary household and bachelor numbers for each settlement (including the basic status of

<sup>92</sup> The two poll-tax (*cizye*) registers from 894 AH/1488-1489 AD and 896 AH/1490-1491 AD briefly discussed above include only non-Muslim taxpayers.

<sup>93</sup> The 1518 register is BOA TD 65, due to its condition it is hardly legible. The 1530 register, BOA TD 370, is a comprehensive tax register for the eastern Balkans, a part of a series of synoptic registers compiled ca. 1530 on the basis of provincial (*sancak*) registers from the 1510s and 1520s, the goal being to provide a demographic and tax revenue snapshot of the empire, very much in tune with the rise of Süleyman I's centralized bureaucratic regime. For an analysis of the demographic situation of the empire based on this series of synoptic registers, see BARKAN 1957. BOA TD 370 is published in facsimile in Sarıay ET AL. 2001-2002, 2 volumes. References to BOA TD 370 correspond to the pagination of the facsimile in vol. 2.

<sup>94</sup> Popescu, "The Region of Dobrudja," 18-19.

tax payers),<sup>95</sup> together with the total tax revenue to be collected from that settlement by the holder of the revenue grant (usually an Ottoman military/administrative functionary who collected that tax revenue in lieu of a salary). The 1530 register includes all types of property—state (land) (*miri*), which was usually apportioned into revenue grants held by state functionaries, pious endowment (Ar. *waqf*, pl *awqaf*; Tr. *vakıf*, pl. *evkaf*), and freehold properties (Tr. *mülk*, pl. *emlak*).<sup>96</sup>

The second registration, from 1569, was made right after the accession of Selim II (r. 1568-1574). It is contained in two registers for the provinces of Silistre and Akkirman (given together). BOA TD 483 is a revenue grant register, which contains all revenue grants (*timars*, *ze'amets*, and *hasses*) with the respective tax generating properties (mostly *miri* land)—the overwhelming part of properties and tax payers. BOA TD 542 is a pious endowment (*evkaf*) and freehold (*emlak*) register which contains data on a limited number of pious endowment and freehold settlements and thus complements the larger BOA TD 483. Dobrudja in these two registers is included in the judgeships (*kazas*) of Silistra, Hırsova, and Tekfur-gölü (just to the south of Constanța, north of Varna),<sup>97</sup> and the district (*nahiye*) of Varna.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> In Ottoman (and generally, Perso-Islamic) political theory, the taxpayers were seen as the “flock” (*re'aya*), the “productive class,” who were “shepherded” by the Sultan and his lieutenants, the “military” class (*askeri*), or the “ruling class,” which actually included not only military personnel, but also administrators and the religio-judicial establishment (the *'ulema*). Most of the *re'aya* were regular taxpayers, but there were some with special status, which usually entailed some special duties that such groups performed for the state, e.g. auxiliary military personnel (often of semi-nomadic origin), mountain-pass guards, butter-makers or rice cultivators who acted as suppliers to the state, etc. In exchange for such services, such *re'aya* groups with special status would be granted certain tax privileges.

<sup>96</sup> Most of the tax revenue collected by Ottoman holders of revenue grants came from taxes on land and agricultural produce, there were also non-land taxable properties, especially in the urban centers (such as shops, public baths, tanneries, etc., which were often part of pious endowments). There were three types of revenue grants according to the tax revenue amount they brought—small (*timar*) usually held by the provincial cavalry officers (*sipahis*), fortress garrison officers, and low-ranking provincial judiciary and administrative personnel, medium (*ze'amet*) held by mid-ranking military/administrative officers based in provincial towns, and large (*hass*) revenue grants, held by the sultan, members of the dynasty, high state dignitaries, and provincial governors. For a detailed discussion of the Ottoman land and taxation regime in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, SEE İNALCIK & QUATAERT 1994: 103-178.

<sup>97</sup> In BOA TD 483, pp. 662-758. The likely reason for which it was Tekfur-gölü (mod. Techirghiol, Romania), and not Varna, that was given as judgeship (*kaza*) seat in this revenue grant register (*timar tahrir defteri*) was that Varna and its hinterland had been included (for the most part) in the pious endowment (*waqf*) of Selim I and so is to be found in the corresponding *evkaf* register BOA TD 542, see footnote immediately following.

<sup>98</sup> In BOA TD 542. Unlike in the 1518/1530 registration, the city of Varna is given as the center of a separate district (*nahiye*) that is subordinate directly to the province (*liva/sancak*) of Silistre. This district included pious endowment settlements and other revenue-generating units. Varna, together with 46 villages and one *mezra'a* belong to the pious endowment of Selim I, two villages and one *mezra'a* are listed as pertaining to the pious endowment of the late Davud Pasha, and these are followed by the pious endowments of the dervish lodges (*zaviyes*) of Akyazılı Baba (near Batova river) and Sarı Saltık (near Kaliakra); see BOA TD 542, pp. 128-187.

Unlike the 1518/1530 registration, this one is detailed (*mufassal*), i.e., in addition to the summary numbers of taxpayers and tax revenues per settlement, it contains the names of tax payers (names of Muslim and non-Muslim household heads and bachelors, as well as non-Muslim widows, considered to be household heads) and detailed breakdowns of tax revenue amounts for each settlement. This allows for much more nuanced analysis of some processes such as migration, colonization, and conversion to Islam.

Both registrations, of 1518/1530 and 1569, have attendant provincial law-codes (*sancak kanunnameleri*),<sup>99</sup> which shed light on various normative aspects of taxation, the land regime, and urban life, but also may contain reference to deportations and migrations, as well as to numerous groups with special status and privileges and duties.

### *General Remarks*

A more general look at the two registrations and the attendant law-codes reveals the following general tendencies about the dominant settlement structure patterns and the demographic development of the region as a whole, with some visible, but not dramatic regional variations. Firstly, Dobrudja was sparsely populated as of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, save for the Danubian and Black Sea coasts, which featured some large Christian settlements, most of them likely inherited from the pre-Ottoman period. Half a century later, the overall population had risen dramatically. This was not a random phenomenon isolated to Dobrudja. Apart from the general population growth in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, characteristic of the Ottoman Empire and the wider Eurasia, the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the demographic “filling up” of parts of the Ottoman Balkans that had been previously depopulated due to events and processes prior to the Ottoman conquest and/or in relation to the political turbulence related to the Ottoman conquest itself and the decades immediately following. This was specifically the case of the eastern Balkans including Thrace in the southeastern Balkans, which had been ravaged by continuous conflict between Bulgaria and Byzantium, as well as internally in Byzantium during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and then suffered the initial negative demographic impact of the Ottoman conquest, and the Balkan northeast, including Dobrudja and neighboring Deliorman, which, as already shown, had lived through processes and events that had a strong negative demographic impact in the centuries preceding the Ottoman conquest (e.g. Pecheneg, Uze, Cuman, and

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<sup>99</sup> The provincial law-code for the province of Silistre is contained in the 1518 BOA TD 65, pp. 1-9, and is copied verbatim in the 1530 BOA TD 370, pp. 379-381. It is published in facsimile and transliteration in AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 3: 465-474. The second provincial law-code – for the provinces of Silistre and Akkirman of 1569 – is to be found in BOA TD 483, pp. 1-39, and is published in facsimile and transliteration in AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 7: 712-779.

Tatar invasions) as well as during the Ottoman conquest vigorously contested by the *voevode* of Wallachia and the additional challenges to Ottoman rule that followed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>100</sup>

Secondly, in both registrations the Muslim population predominated in general, especially in the countryside. The overwhelming majority of the Muslims in the countryside were of Turcoman origin, some had migrated from other parts of the Balkans, especially Thrace, which was the first area of Turcoman colonization in the Balkans (starting from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century), other must have come directly from Anatolia. Dervish groups played a visible role in the overall migration process. There are also significant references, especially in the 1518/1530 registration and the attendant law-code regarding the arrival of forcibly deported Turcomans, most likely in the context of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>101</sup> There was also some Tatar migrations from the northeast, especially in northern Dobrudja.<sup>102</sup>

Thirdly, the settlement structure of the region was not well developed in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was characterized by a large number of small (or very small) Muslim villages, most probably recently founded, and a small number of medium and large Christian villages that were much older and most probably dated back well into pre-Ottoman times. Most of the old, likely pre-Ottoman Christian settlements were unsurprisingly situated along the Danube and the Black Sea coast. The very small average size of Muslim villages in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century (1518/1530 registration) suggests that Turcoman migration and colonization into Dobrudja was a relatively recent phenomenon. The 1518/1530 registration also reveals a high number (and relative proportion) of (temporary, usually not settled) agricultural sites (*mezra 'as*) usually associated with recently arrived Turcoman Muslim colonizers. This was also typical of areas where Turcoman colonization had started not too long ago and is also in tune with developments in neighboring regions in the northeastern Balkans, such as Deliorman and Gerlovo. By the late 1560s, the settlement structure in the countryside had undergone significant stabilization; the average size of the numerous Muslim villages had increased significantly, although they were still much smaller than the Christian villages. Many, and in some areas most, of the *mezra 'as* of the 1518/1530 registration had turned into fully fledged Muslim villages.

<sup>100</sup> On the process of re-population of the eastern Balkans in the more general Balkan and Ottoman context, see BOYKOV 2016: 134-145.

<sup>101</sup> For a general discussion of state-organized deportations as a method of settlement and colonization in early modern Ottoman history, see BARKAN 1949-1950, 1951-1952, and 1953-1954.

<sup>102</sup> As the case study presented in this essay is on the judgeship of Silistre in southwestern Dobrudja, Tatar migration and colonization is paid only minimal attention. For more on this subject, see GÖKBİLGIN 1957: 86-90.

Fourthly, a very large portion of the Muslim tax-paying population, especially in the countryside, in some parts of Dobrudja more than 50% in 1518/1530 was not regular *re'aya* (i.e. agriculturalist *re'aya* paying regular agricultural taxes as well as extraordinary levies—*avarız-ı divaniye*), but belonged to various groups with special duties, largely related to the functioning of the Ottoman military—most notably the *yürük* auxiliary military corps,<sup>103</sup> including active soldiers participating in campaigns (*eşküncüs*), “helpers” (*yamaks*), as well as falconers (*doğancıs*), colt-breeders (*gürecis*), butter-makers (*yağcıs*) that acted as suppliers of the Ottoman army. In exchange for the performance of these duties, they paid lower land tax (*çift resmi*) if they had land and were more often than not exempt from extraordinary levies. Most of these, especially the *yürüks*, were of semi-nomadic origin and were traditionally involved in animal husbandry, especially sheep breeding. Even by 1518 though, one may observe the efforts of the Ottoman state to tie them to the land and gradually push them into becoming sedentary agriculturalists. By the late 1560s, the proportion of these irregular *re'aya* groups had diminished dramatically, most of them became more firmly tied to the land and engaged in agriculture, while many of them simply lost their privileged status and were registered as regular *re'aya*, others who retained that status in name, had to pay higher land tax and in some cases extraordinary levies as well. This process of sedentarization and territorialization of previously semi-nomadic and itinerant groups as reflected in 16<sup>th</sup>-century tax registrations for Dobrudja was not peculiar to Dobrudja, but could be observed in various corners of the empire, especially in the Balkans and (parts of) Anatolia and was in tune with the centralist policies pursued by contemporary Ottoman sultans (especially Süleyman I).<sup>104</sup> However, as it will be shown in some detail below, in Dobrudja, given the region's mostly steppe terrain, this process of sedentarization and territorialization of traditionally mobile groups was not as smooth and straightforward as in other parts of the Balkans, where climatic and terrain conditions favored agriculture and facilitated sedentarization.

Fifthly, while in quantitative terms the main source of rural population increase between the two tax registrations was Turcoman migration and settlement, the percentage-wise increase of the rural Christian population was comparable to that of the rural Muslim population. This could be explained with the possible migrations of Christians from other, more densely populated parts of Ottoman Bulgaria and possibly the wider Balkans, especially from north central and possibly western Bulgaria, and also with the development of the *waqf* (pious endowment) institution, which facilitated the migration and settlement of large numbers of villagers into

<sup>103</sup> On *yürüks*, see GÖKBİLGİN 1957, ÇETİNTÜRK 1943, YENİ 2013a, and YENİ 2013b.

<sup>104</sup> See LINDNER 1983: esp. 75-103; ANTOV 2017: 115-157, GÜNDÜZ 2012, and USTA & ÖZEL 2011. On the territorialization and sedentarization of Vlachs in the western Balkans, see ĐURĐEV 1963.

the region, the emergence of some extraordinarily large Christian *waqf* villages being a characteristic related feature.

Sixtly, urban centers were the legacy of the pre-Ottoman period and their development under Ottoman rule did not differ significantly from other parts of the Balkans.<sup>105</sup> The fortune of Balkan cities under Ottoman rule depended strongly on occupying an important position in the Ottoman provincial administrative structure and (in many cases) on the presence of stationed fortress garrisons (such as in the provincial capital Silistre and the center of a judgeship Hirsova); indeed these were among the main factors that stably guaranteed the formal urban status of a settlement and also conditioned the presence of large Muslim communities (often in the majority).<sup>106</sup>

Lastly, conversion to Islam and converts to Islam played a significant role in the demographic, ethno-religious, and socio-cultural development of Dobrudja in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Conversion and converts to Islam may be seen as a direct consequence of the Ottoman conquest and Turcoman migration and colonization in the countryside as well as Ottoman policies of urban development.<sup>107</sup> As elsewhere in the Balkans local converts to Islam<sup>108</sup> had a pronounced presence in cities<sup>109</sup> and were significantly less prominent in the countryside. A peculiar feature of the demographic and ethno-religious picture in Dobrudja, directly related to its location along the frontier with Christendom and the Crimean Khanate, that sets it apart from most other areas in the Ottoman Balkans, is the remarkably high number and percentage of manumitted slaves (*atiks*), who usually had their origins far away from Dobrudja and the Ottoman domains—former prisoners of war from northern and central Europe (who could have been brought to Dobrudja by Ottoman troops from the province of Silistre) or people captured and enslaved during Crimean Tatar raids in southern Muscovite Russia and southern Poland

<sup>105</sup> On Ottoman urban development in the Balkans, see TODOROV 1983) KIEL 1989, BOYKOV 2010, ANTOV 2017: 158-204.

<sup>106</sup> Thus, by 1569 Muslims constituted the majority of residents in Silistre and Hirsova, while important ports like İshakçı (Isaccea) and Tolcı (Tulcea) that had the socio-economic characteristics of towns would not even have urban status and had tiny Muslim communities; see BOA TD 370, pp. 383, 406, 408.; BOA TD 483, pp. 239-260, 418-441, 509-515, 634-655; and DIMITROV 1983: 33-40.

<sup>107</sup> On the most important aspects of conversion to Islam in the early modern Ottoman Balkans, see KRSTIĆ 2011, and MINKOV 2004. Specifically on the much debated topic of what “factors” conditioned one’s decision to convert to Islam, see MINKOV 2004: 64-109, VRYONIS 1971: 351-402, BULLIET 1979: 33-42.

<sup>108</sup> Male converts could usually be identified by the patronymics “veled-i Abdullah” (son of the “servant of God”) and “veled-i Abidin”. Female converts (as well as Muslim women in general) have very limited presence in Ottoman administrative documentation and are hard to identify; see MÉNAGE 1966.

<sup>109</sup> On conversion to Islam and converts in early modern Ottoman cities, see LOWRY 2009 and NORMAN 2017.



(including in the lands of modern Ukraine).<sup>110</sup> Slave manumission could usually take place only after the slave's conversion to Islam.<sup>111</sup>

### *The judgeship (kaza) of Silistre as a case study*

Let me illustrate these general tendencies with some concrete numbers from the judgeship of Silistre, which contained the southwestern part of Dobrudja, including the provincial capital Silistre in 1518/1530 and 1569 tax registrations, the boundaries of the judgeship remaining unchanged.<sup>112</sup> Just as in the preceding presentation of the general tendencies of demographic and ethno-religious change in Dobrudja, this section will first present a discussion of demographic and ethno-religious change in the rural countryside, and will then move to urban development (represented by the sole urban center in the judgeship, the provincial capital Silistre), to conclude with a brief discussion of the role of conversion and converts to Islam in both Silistre and the rural countryside.

### *General population dynamics and settlement structure*

In the 1518/1530 tax registration, the countryside population of the judgeship (i.e., excluding the only urban center, Silistre), was 2616 households,<sup>113</sup> or, if one accepts 5 as a household multiplier,<sup>114</sup> roughly 13,000 souls. Of these 2,074 households (79%) were Muslim.<sup>115</sup> Half a century later, in 1569, there were 9,415 households, of which 7,322 (78%) were Muslim (see Table 1).

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<sup>110</sup> On the role of the Crimean Tatars as major suppliers of slaves in the Ottoman Empire from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the late 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, see FISHER 1972.

<sup>111</sup> On slave manumission and conversion to Islam, see FISHER 1980.

<sup>112</sup> The judgeship also contained a small part of the neighboring region of Deliorman to the west. In modern day terms, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century judgeship of Silistre included the modern Bulgarian province of Silistra, a part of the Bulgarian province of Dobrich, and a part of the Romanian province of Constanța.

<sup>113</sup> All calculations are based on the respective sections for the judgeship of Silistre in BOA TD 370 (dated 1530, but based on the 1518 BOA TD 65), pp. 383-398 as well as BOA TD 483, pp. 218-447 and BOA TD 542, pp. 60-80 for 1569. When relevant and possible, references to specific pages will be made.

<sup>114</sup> The register data also includes numbers for bachelors (young men of marriageable age) who were tax payers too. In the 1518/1530 registration, there are 319 Muslim and 129 (Orthodox) Christian bachelors. However, the present analysis uses only household numbers as bachelor data are not always reliable. Using a household multiplier (which would include bachelors), the most widely accepted in Ottoman studies being 5, one may produce a rough population total. On household multiplier values, see BARKAN 1970: 168, and İNALCIK & QUATAERT 1994: 28-29.

<sup>115</sup> My calculations for the judgeship of Silistre based on the 1518/1530 tax registration correspond closely to Grigor Boykov's estimates which he made as a part of a larger study on the demographic history of early modern Ottoman Bulgaria, see BOYKOV 2016: 135.

Table 1: Population distribution by households in the judgeship (*kaza*) of Silistre in 1518/30 and 1569<sup>116</sup>

Year	Muslim households					Christian households				All
	Regular	<i>Yürüks</i> (and related groups)	Evkaf	Other	Total Muslims	Regular households	Widow households	Other	Total Christians	Gross Total
1518/1530	918	1,032	0	124	2,074	518	6	18	542	2,616
1569	5,541	912	521	348	7,322	2,058	11	24	2093	9,415

The 2,616 rural households in 1518/1530 were to be found in 218 settlements and four Turcoman (semi-)nomadic communities (*cema'ats*) that were not yet registered at a specific locale. All 2,074 Muslim heads of household but two were registered in 202 (fully) Muslim villages, two settled agricultural sites (*mezra'as*) and the mentioned four *cema'ats*. Importantly, apart from the four not yet settled *cema'ats*, there were 31 more such Turcoman (semi-)nomadic communities (*cema'ats*) that were already registered as parts of villages, i.e. were already formally (and likely still tentatively) associated with a specific locale, usually one *cema'at* in a village—e.g. the *cema'at* of Etmek Yemez in the village of Dülger Pınarı,<sup>117</sup> or the *cema'at* of Saruhan in the village of Derdlü Kuyusu.<sup>118</sup> One of the two settled agricultural sites (*mezra'as*) was inhabited by a *cema'at*.<sup>119</sup> Two Muslim

<sup>116</sup> “*Yürüks* and related groups” in this table refers to *yürüks*, including active campaigners (*eşkıncis*) and reservists (or “helpers” and “50-ers,” *yamaks* and *ellicis*), buttermakers (*yağcıs*), colt-breeders (*gürecis*), falconers (*doğancıs*), and *müsellem* (“exemptees”). What was common for all of them is that they performed certain military and logistic duties for the Ottoman state in exchange for being exempt from the extraordinary levies (*avarız-ı divaniye*) as well as other tax privileges (the latter could vary).

<sup>117</sup> BOA TD 370, p. 389. “Etmek [mod. *ekmek*] yemez” stands for “those who do not eat bread,” fully in tune with pastoral nomadic subsistence patterns that had little to do with the cereal economy.

<sup>118</sup> BOA TD 370, p. 388. Saruhan was an Ottoman province (and a pre-Ottoman Turcoman principality) in western Anatolia; this obviously points to the possible origin of that nomadic community.

<sup>119</sup> The *cema'at* of Arabacı Mustafa in the agricultural site (*mezra'a*) of Çakırcı Çamurluğu, with a total of 4 Muslim households (two regular households, one colt-breeder, and one helper (*yamak*)), BOA TD 370, p. 388. There was also “*mezra'a-i cema'at-i Kara Kasım*” (“the *mezra'a* of the [semi-nomadic] community of Kara Kasım”), but it was registered as “empty,” i.e., most likely, while this “agricultural site” was already associated with that “community,” Kara Kasım and his people were not found by the Ottoman tax official at the time of registration; BOA TD 370, p. 389. The other settled (*mezra'a*) was Söğüdüçük with a total of 14 Muslim households (3 regular households and 11 helpers (*yamaks*) with peasant family farms (*çifti*) assigned), BOA TD 370, p. 386.

heads of household (most likely recent converts to Islam) were registered in the mixed, but overwhelmingly Christian village of Tatarışte.<sup>120</sup> There were also 56 *mezra 'as* that had no registered tax payers on them (as was usually the case), but were worked by people from surrounding settlements. For almost all of these one could say with high degree of likelihood that they were worked by (or associated with) Muslims from surrounding settlements.<sup>121</sup> This was, as already mentioned, typical of areas where Turcoman colonization was a recent phenomenon.

*Table 2: Distribution of villages by religious affiliation. Agricultural sites in the judgeship of Silistre in 1518/30 and 1569.<sup>122</sup>*

Year	Villages				<i>Mezra 'as</i> (agricultural sites)
	Muslim	Christian	Mixed	Total	
1518/30	202	14	1	218	58 (2)
1569	346	13	8	367	13

In terms of size, the Muslim rural settlements in the judgeship of Silistre as of 1518/1530 were overwhelmingly small. If one classifies villages by population size as “very small” (1-5 households), “small” (6-20 households), “medium” (21-40 households), “large” (41-80 households), and “very large” (more than 80 households),<sup>123</sup> then 93% of Muslim villages in the judgeship of Silistre were “very small” or “small” (188 of 202; 58 “very small” and 130 “small”), with an average household size of 10 (or roughly 50 souls).

The rural Christians in the judgeship of Silistre as of 1518/1530 were registered in 15 villages—14 fully Christian, and one “mixed,” the latter was overwhelmingly Christian, with 92 Christian and only two Muslim householders, the latter two, as already mentioned, likely recent converts. 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of these 15 villages were

<sup>120</sup> BOA TD 370, p. 383; BOA TD 483, pp. 292-293. Most likely this is modern Tataritsa, today a neighborhood of Aydemir village, on the right (Bulgarian) bank of the Danube, near Silistra.

<sup>121</sup> This conclusion can be made on the basis of the almost exclusively “Muslim” (i.e., Turkish, Arabic, and Persian) toponymy of the *mezra 'as* and their location, as much as one can judge from their position in the tax registers, close to Muslim settlements.

<sup>122</sup> The number of *mezra 'as* in this table is given as “58 (2)” to indicate that even though *mezra 'as* usually do not have registered residents, in the 1518/1530 registration 2 of the 58 *mezra 'as* in the judgeship of Silistre were settled and indeed had registered residents. See also footnote 119 above. I have not included these two settled Muslim *mezra 'as* in the calculations of village numbers in Table 2. If counted as rural settlements, one of them would count as “very small,” with 4 households, and the other as “small,” with 14 households.

<sup>123</sup> This specific classification of villages by size has already been used by a number of Balkan, especially Bulgarian demographic historians of the early modern Ottoman period; see GEOR-GIEVA 1999: 59-91, esp. 71-72.

“medium,” “large,” or “very large,” with an average household size of 36, i.e., almost four times larger than that of Muslim villages. Unlike the Muslim villages in the judgeship, which were situated mostly inland and were most likely recently founded, the Christian villages were largely generally situated along the Danubian coast, and were likely “old,” possibly pre-Ottoman settlements.

Table 3: distribution of villages in the judgeship of Silistre by size (in number of households), 1518/30

Religious affiliation	Very small (1-5)	Small (6-20)	Medium (21-40)	Large (41-80)	Very large >80
Muslim (202)	58	130	13	1	0
Christian (14)	2	3	5	4	0
Mixed (1)	0	0	0	0	1

In 1569, the total of 9,415 rural households in the judgeship of Silistre were registered in 367 villages, of which 346 were Muslim, 13 Christian, and 8 “mixed” (again, overwhelmingly Christian with a couple of, most likely, recent local converts to Islam in each “mixed” village). Eleven of the Muslim and two of the mixed villages were pious endowment (*waqf*) villages, belonging to the pious endowments of the late Piri Pasha and Abdüsselam Bey.<sup>124</sup> Of the 7,322 Muslim households, 7,253 lived in Muslim villages, the remaining 69 in “mixed” villages. The average size of Muslim villages had doubled—from ten households per village in 1518 to 21 in 1569—and most villages (305 of 346, or 88%) were already either “small” (6-20 households) or “medium” (21-40 households). Of the 346 Muslim villages, 90 had “split” from already existing villages, these 90 usually being former neighborhoods (*mahalles*) of older villages that had formally attained the status of new, separate villages.<sup>125</sup> This was a typical feature of demographic development in areas that were experiencing rapid population growth and were, at the same time, past the initial, early stage of Turcoman colonization. In the same vein, and in relation to the processes of territorialization, sedentarization, and agrarianization of semi-nomadic and itinerant groups (on which more below), the number of registered *mezra* ‘as had fallen from 58

<sup>124</sup> The registration of these 13 settlements is to be found in BOA TD 542, pp. 60-80, all other villages may be found in BOA TD 483, pp. 218-239, 261-447.

<sup>125</sup> There are no sources that attest to a special, elaborate procedure of granting “new village” status, other than the actual registration of such new villages in tax registers. In many cases, such new “split” villages retained, for the time being, the word “neighborhood” in their names. To give one example, “Karye-i mahalle-i Kara Abdi, Doğan Oğlu nam karyeden bölünmüştür” (“the village of the neighborhood of Kara Abdi, split (or seceded) from the village named Doğan Oğlu,” BOA TD 483, p. 378.

in 1518/1530 to 13 in 1569, with most of the *mezra* 'as registered in 1518/1530, having been transformed into regular (Muslim) villages; there were no more Turcoman (semi-)nomadic groups (*cema* 'ats) not registered at a specific locale (compared to 4 in 1518), and the number of *cema* 'ats registered as part of villages had fallen from 31 (in 1518) to 14 in 1519 (despite the 3.5-time increase of registered Muslim rural households).

As for the rural Christians in 1569, the 2,093 Christian households in the judgeship of Silistre were registered in 21 villages—13 Christian and 8 mixed. Of these 21 villages, 16 (76%) were “large” (41-80 households) or “very large” (above 80 households), the average household size being 100.<sup>126</sup>

*Table 4: distribution of villages in the judgeship of Silistre by size (in number of households), 1569*

Religious affiliation	Very small (1-5)	Small (6-20)	Medium (21-40)	Large (41-80)	Very large >80
Muslim (346)	19	174	131	21	1
Christian (13)	0	0	3	4	6
Mixed (8)	0	0	2	2	4

*Agents of Turcoman Colonization; origins and causes of Turcoman migrations into Dobrudja*

As already mentioned, the settlement structure and overall demographic characteristics of the rural Muslim population in the judgeship of Silistre (and the rest of Dobrudja, especially its southern part) suggest strongly that Muslim colonization in Dobrudja was a recent phenomenon as of the 1518 registration and that most of the incoming Muslim colonizers were Turcomans ultimately (but not necessarily directly) originating from Anatolia. More than 90% of the rural place names in the judgeship of Silistre in both the 1518/1530 and 1569 registrations are of Turkic, Arabic, or Persian origin (or a combination thereof). In the 1518/1530 registration, more than 60% of the settlement place names contain either the name of a founder or a founding group, or a water source (usually “pınar,” Eng. spring, or “kuyu,” Eng. well), or both—e.g. İdris Kuyusu, Yunus Pınarı, Sevindik Kuyusu, İshak Pınarı, etc. While local, pre-Ottoman place names have been utilized by

<sup>126</sup> It should be noted, however, that a bit more than 1/3 of the rural Christian households were concentrated in two huge *derbend* (lit. mountain pass) pious endowment (*waqf*) villages, whose villagers had the duty to guard dangerous road passes nearby from brigands. If these two villages, Bazergan Pınarı (mod. Iskra, province of Silistra) and Şan (?) Pınarı (unidentified), are taken out of the calculation, the average household size for the remaining 19 villages would be much lower.

the incoming Turcoman colonizers (e.g. Dobromir), these were very few.<sup>127</sup> In the 1518/1530 registration, around 50% (1,032 of 2,074) of the rural Muslim household heads were registered as *yürüks* or related/constituent or comparable groups, such as *eşküncüs* (“active” *yürüks*, participating in campaigns), *ellicis* and *yamaks* (*yürük* “reservists” or “helpers”),<sup>128</sup> *gürecis* (colt-breeders), *yağcıs* (butter-makers), etc., which attests, in addition to place names and the presence of numerous (semi-)nomadic *cema'ats* that these were largely mobile groups whose subsistence was strongly associated, at least partly, with animal husbandry.<sup>129</sup> In addition, there are clear indications, especially in the 1569 registration, of the presence of dervishes and dervish groups, as well as *seyyids* (descendants of the Prophet), whereby rural Muslim mystics and *seyyids* (the latter often being dervishes themselves) could play leadership roles in the processes of migration and colonization.

One clear clue related to the issue of the origins (or causes) of these migrations is the presence of a very sizeable group of deportees, registered as the “*ze'amet* of the deportees” in the judgeship of Pravadi in both the 1518 and 1530 registers, most likely deported from Anatolia to Dobrudja in the context of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the related persecutions of Safavid sympathizers on Ottoman soil in Anatolia. The Ottoman government’s decision to deport people to Dobrudja can also be explained with the desolate state of the region only several decades earlier as described by the likes of de Palatio, de Lecce, and Angioiello. According to the clearly legible record in BOA TD 370 (dated 1530), this group consisted of 109 households that already had peasant

<sup>127</sup> See Strashimir Dimitrov’s very similar observations on the 1530 (BOA TD 370) registration for the judgeship of Varna, the one that contained the other half of southern Dobrudja, to the east of Silistre; DIMITROV 1977-1999: 281-289.

<sup>128</sup> According to a law-code for the *yürüks* issued by Mehmed II, 24 *yürüks* formed one *ocak* (hearth), of them one was and *eşküncü* (or *eşkıncı*), three were *çatal* (reservists, ready to replace the *eşkıncı* if necessary), and 20 were *yamaks*, who did not participate in campaigns but had to materially support those who did, BARKAN 1943: 393. By 1530, according to a law-code for the *yürüks* contained in BOA TD 370, a hearth already included 5 *eşkıncıs* and 20 helpers (*yamaks*), when the *eşkıncıs* were on campaign they would take 50 *akçe* from each of the helpers (hence the term *ellici*, “50-er,” also used for *yamaks*) of their hearth to cover campaign expenses, the *yamaks* would in turn be exempt from extraordinary taxes (*avarızı divaniye*); BARKAN 1943: 260, 279. The terms *ellici* and *yamak* could also apply to the *müsellem* (or “exemptee”) corps, which was comparable in functions and status to that of the *yürüks*. See IMBER 2002: 266. However, the number of registered rural *müsellem* households in the judgeship of Silistre in both 1518/30 and 1569 is negligible.

<sup>129</sup> An additional 6%, or 124 of 2,074 had some other “special status”, 33 were formally registered as “deportees” (*sürgünan*, see discussion on forced deportations below), and 91 had some other privileged taxation status (village imams, sons of sipahis, *seyyids*, etc.). See discussion below on the Ottoman centralist vision and the sedentarization and agrarianization of semi-nomads, and the unification of tax-paying *re'aya*.

family farms (*çift*) assigned,<sup>130</sup> 1,025 (other) households (apparently without land yet), and 650 bachelors. While the text in the 1518 registration is very short, the 1530 one gives a lot of detail, stating that these deportees (*sürgünan*) were deported from Anatolia to Dobrudja and had been already registered in the previous register (apparently the 1518 one) in the time of Sultan Selim; they had to pay twelve *akçe* land tax (*çift resmi*), instead of the regular 22, and those who do not have a peasant family farm (*çift*)—six *akçe*, plus one sheep per 100; the deportees were exempt from all other taxes.<sup>131</sup> While both the 1518 and 1530 registers have the same figure for the tax revenue to be collected from this *ze'amet* of deportees, it is not entirely clear whether this group of deportees consisted of the same people (in the 1518 and 1530 registers), or alternatively, there may have been recurring groups of deportees deported from Anatolia to Dobrudja, with Pravadi being a “depot” or “allocation center” from where those deportees would be directed to some other part of Dobrudja.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, we see numerous scattered “deportees” (*sürgünan*) already (permanently) settled in villages in the judgeships of Pravadi, Silistre, and Varna as of 1530 (in addition to the abovementioned “deportees” registered as a group in Pravadi).<sup>133</sup> The respective article on the “community of deportees” (*sürgünan ta'ifesi*) in the attendant law-code(s) in the 1518 and 1530 registers also suggests that those “deportees” were accompanied followed by “relatives” who were likely not meant to be deported, but once having moved from Anatolia to Dobrudja, were given the status of “deportees” too.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>130</sup> *Çift* was a plot of land that could be cultivated by one yoked pair (Tr. *çift*) of oxen. The size of this plot could vary from five to 15 hectares, depending on the quality of the land. The Ottoman government aimed to assign one *çift* to each household (*hane*), hence this aspect of the Ottoman land regime has become known as the *çift-hane* system; see İnalçık's discussion in İNALCIK & QUATAERT 1994: 143-154.

<sup>131</sup> BOA TD 65, p. 30; BOA TD 370, p. 436.

<sup>132</sup> Earlier, I had argued that these must be (physically) the same people in both the 1518 and 1530 registrations, whereby the 1518 registration was plainly replicated in the 1530 register; see Antov 2017: 120; upon further research and reflection, and especially taking into account that while the expected tax revenue figure (to be collected from this group) was the same in the 1518 and 1530 registers, the household and bachelor figures in the 1518 register are completely illegible, and that it is unlikely that those same 1,784 registered household heads and bachelors had stayed with that status for 12 years (moreover, the 1530 text states clearly that the deportees were expected to settle somewhere and pay their taxes to a *sipahi* who controlled the land on which the deportees chose to settle), it may be that it was recurrent groups of deportees that were directed to Pravadi in the 1510s and 1520s, and possibly the 1530s. See also Str. Dimitrov's argument that, indeed, the deportees were meant to settle (permanently) somewhere (else) in Dobrudja, and not stay in the judgeship of Pravadi; DIMITROV 1997-1999: 298.

<sup>133</sup> BOA TD 370, pp. 384-387, 391, 394, 397, 399, 409, 411, 415-420, 422-444, 450, 452, 465-470.

<sup>134</sup> BOA TD 65, pp. 3-4; BOA TD 470, p. 379; for a transliteration, see AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 3: 486; for a full translation (of this particular article), see ANTOV 2017: 121. I have also argued that at least some of these exiled newcomers from Anatolia may have spilled into the neighboring region of Deliorman, *ibid.* 121-124.

In addition to these deportees (and their relatives) exiled from Anatolia to Dobrudja and some groups, like the above mentioned *cema'at* of Saruhan, which may also be identified as originating from Anatolia, there were groups of newcomers that could be clearly identified as originating from Thrace in the southeastern Balkans, especially dervish groups. One such group is the “progeny of Sheykh Timur Han” (*nesl-i şeyh Timur Han*) whose representatives could be found scattered throughout the judgeship of Silistre as well as in neighboring Deliorman during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, enjoying certain tax privileges.<sup>135</sup> Another one was one of the most prominent non-Sharia-minded, “antinomian” dervish collectivity the Abdals of Rum of Otman Baba’s branch (originally taking shape in Thrace in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), who settled in Dobrudja, Deliorman, and Gerlovo in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the second and third heads of the collectivity (after Otman Baba) establishing their convents in Dobrudja and Deliorman, respectively.<sup>136</sup> To this one should add the Abdals’ contemporary rivals, the Bektashis who also made inroads in the northeastern Balkans in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. All in all, it may be argued that most of the Turcoman migrants into Dobrudja in the 16<sup>th</sup> century originated from Anatolia and the south/southeastern Balkans (esp. Thrace) due to political and socio-economic pressures—especially the Safavid-Ottoman conflict and related violence in Anatolia, and population pressure in both Anatolia and the southeastern Balkans.<sup>137</sup> In addition, the spectacular growth of the number of registered rural Muslims (or more correctly, Muslim taxpayers) in Dobrudja in the 16<sup>th</sup> century may also be attributed to natural population growth as well as, possibly, to an improving capacity of the state to register taxpayers.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>135</sup> In 1569, there were 15 households of descendants of Sheykh Timur Han in the judgeship of Silistre; the tax exemptions they enjoyed were similar to those of other privileged groups like the *yürüks*, with the major difference that the descendants of Sheykh Timur Han did not perform any special duties to the state; see the respective articles in the 1569 provincial law-code for the province of Silistre; AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 7: 713. Numerous descendants of Sheykh Timur Han were concurrently present in neighboring Deliorman; see ANTOV 2017: 145-146. The actual Sheykh Timur Han was one of the early “colonizing dervishes” in Thrace, who was given the *mezra'a* of Elmalı near Dimetoka (mod. Didymoteicho in Greek Thrace) to cultivate and settle in the reign of Murad I (r. 1362-1389); the holding was later turned into a pious endowment (*waqf*); see GÖKBİLGİN 1952: 174-175; and BARKAN 1942: 338.

<sup>136</sup> See ANTOV 2017: 41-93; 139-148; 206-250.

<sup>137</sup> See especially COOK 1972.

<sup>138</sup> On overall population growth in the Ottoman Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (esp. the first half), see BARKAN 1957: 19-36. For an overview of wider developments in Europe, see MOLS 1971. For a brief overview of the evolution of Ottoman governance and its bureaucratic capabilities from the 14<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, see ŞAHİN 2017.



*The Ottoman centralist vision and Dobruja countryside: sedentarization and agrarianization of semi-nomadic groups and the “unification” of the taxpaying population (the re‘aya)*

It was already mentioned (in the “general remarks” on Dobrudja’s demographic development in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) that the 16<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a marked decrease in the percentage of rural taxpayers with special status and that most of the rural population groups that enjoyed such status, especially among the rural Muslims—*yürüks* and related/comparable groups of usually semi-nomadic provenance, deportees with special status, and others, were converted, for the most part, into regular tax-paying peasant *re‘aya*. The gradual withdrawal of tax privileges and the “unification” of the rural *re‘aya* was part of the Ottoman state’s centralizing vision and its evolving ambition to maximize tax revenues and control over rural (and urban, for that matter) populations in the provinces by applying common standards and minimizing instances of “special treatment” of “provincial particularism,” whereby increased tax revenue was meant to fund professional (esp. military) cadres directly paid by the treasury, at the expense of loosely organized and less specialized groups in the provinces that would perform duties to the state in exchange for tax privileges.

To illustrate these processes with some evidence from the 16<sup>th</sup> century judgeship of Silistre: in the 1518/1530 registration, 1,032 of the 2,074 registered households heads were *yürüks* and related/comparable groups (butter-makers, colt-breeders, etc.). Importantly, they paid only 12 *akçe* land tax (*çift resmi*) instead of the usual 22, if they cultivated a standard plot of land (*çift*), they also enjoyed varying degrees of exemption from the “extraordinary taxes” (*avarız-ı divaniye*).<sup>139</sup> Most importantly, while the regular rural *re‘aya* (be they Muslims or non-Muslims) was tied to a specific locale, whereby they had to pay their taxes to the respective *sipahi* (holder of the *timar* on which the peasants resided) and could not move freely to another place (and another *sipahi*), these privileged groups, which constituted 50% of the rural Muslim population in 1518/1530, could choose where to stay and settle (whether they practiced agriculture or not).<sup>140</sup> Thus, these people were

<sup>139</sup> See the 1518 law-code for the province of Silistre, replicated verbatim in the 1530 register; AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 3: 466.

<sup>140</sup> If a regular peasant left the *timar* of his *sipahi* (who was in effect, the peasant’s “landlord”), and went somewhere else (e.g. to land controlled by another *sipahi*), the peasant’s original “landlord” could forcibly get him back if less than ten years had elapsed, if more than ten years had elapsed from the peasant’s flight, the peasant could stay at his “new” place, but had to pay a special tax to the original landlord (*çift-bozan resmi*, or a tax for “breaking the tie to the land”), as a compensation. The privileged groups discussed here could, however, move freely from place to place (*timar* to *timar*) and pay their (reduced) land-tax to which ever *sipahi* or “landlord” they chose. “Ammâ defter-i cedidden ellerinde temessüki olanlar ki, sahîh *yörük* ve *yağcı* ve

not tied to a *sipahi* (or “landlord”) and had a substantial freedom of movement (together with their substantial tax privileges). Both the freedoms these groups enjoyed and the percentage of rural Muslims that they constituted in 1518/1530 (roughly half) are quite impressive, but also not too surprising given that these were essentially newcomers in a sparsely populated area that the state was interested in populating and utilising economically (and politically), and whereby the Ottoman central government was ready to grant (initially) substantial privileges to the newcomers. However, even at that (relatively) early stage of colonization (1518/1530), the Ottoman government made systematic efforts to assign plots of land (*çift*) to those privileged groups (*yürüks*, buttermakers, colt-breeders, etc.) and duly register them as land cultivators. Thus, in the 1518/1530 registration, almost all (98.5% or 1,017 of 1,032) of these privileged *yürüks*, “helpers,” colt-breeders, butter-makers and the like are registered as *çiftlü*, i.e. holding/cultivating a peasant family farm (*çift*).<sup>141</sup> Importantly too, as of 1518/1530, the already discussed “deportees” (*sürgünan*) were already tied to their *sipahi* once they made their choice of place to settle, even if they enjoyed tax privileges.<sup>142</sup>

By 1569, things had changed dramatically. Not only had the percentage of *yürüks*, butter-makers, colt-breeders, and the like fallen from 50% (of all rural Muslim household heads, 1,032 of 2,074) in 1518/1530 to 12.5% (912 of 7,322) in 1569, but these “privileged” groups had lost most of their earlier privileges. They did not have the freedom to change their *sipahi* (or “landlord”) anymore, and they had to pay the full value of the land tax—22 *akçes*, like everybody else; they still retained exemptions regarding the extraordinary taxes.<sup>143</sup> However, as already mentioned, the processes of sedentarization and agrarianization of semi-nomadic groups advanced at a lower speed in Dobrudja, compared to elsewhere

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*küreci* [read *güreci*] ve *müsellem* ve *sâhib-i berât* ise, ihtiyâr ellerindedir; kande varurlar ise, vech-i meşrûh üzere vardukları yerlerde öşürlerin ve resimlerin vereler. Yerinden göçene sipahi dahil etmeye” [“But those who possess a certificate from the new register, that they are genuine *yürüks* or butter-makers, or colt-breeders, or *müsellem* or a holder of a *berat* (a diploma), the choice is theirs—wherever they go, they pay their tithe and taxes in the manner described. The *sipahi* [i.e. the old, original “landlord”] should not interfere with those who left his place.”]; AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 3: 466-467. See also DIMITROV 1997-1999: 290.

<sup>141</sup> To give just one, but telling example: in the village of Dülger Pınarı, where the (semi-)nomadic group (*cema'at*) of “those who do not eat bread” (*cema'at-ı etmek yemez*) was registered, there were two regular *re'aya* households (*hane-i ra'yyet*) and three “households of butter-makers and “helpers” with *çift*” (*hane-i yağcıyan ve yamakan-ı çiftlü*), BOA TD 370, p. 389. That is, “those who do not eat bread” (who must have been the butter-makers and “helpers” registered in the village) already had been assigned peasant farms to cultivate. See also Str. Dimitov’s similar observations on the neighboring judgeship of Varna in the same tax register, DIMITROV 1997-1999, :289-301.

<sup>142</sup> AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 3: 467.

<sup>143</sup> AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 7: 713.

in the Balkans, especially due to the region's steppe land nature, which is reflected in the continued registration of semi-nomadic groups (already attached to a locale) in the 1569 register and regulations about the transhumance patterns of some *yürüks* (who did not yet cultivate land) in the 1569 law-code for the province of Silistre.<sup>144</sup> In 1585, the French nobleman François de Pavie remarked that while passing through Dobrudja he observed "families who changed their domicile according to their convenience and the [availability of] grass at the places at which they would reside."<sup>145</sup>

### *The growth of the rural Christian population*

While the present essay has placed an emphasis on the demographically more important Turcoman migrations and colonization, a few remarks on the equally spectacular growth of the rural Christian population in the judgeship of Silistre in the 16<sup>th</sup> century would also be appropriate. The almost fourfold increase of the rural Christian households in the judgeship, from 542 in 1518/1530 to 2,093 in 1569, was indisputably the result of some combination of inward migrations, natural population growth and the improved ability of the Ottoman state to register its rural taxpayers. While the documentary material pertaining to 16<sup>th</sup>-century Dobrudja would not yield overly specific evidence regarding natural population growth or the improved bureaucratic efficiency of the Ottoman administration (especially when one compares the growth of the Christian and Muslim rural populations), a couple of concrete remarks could be made regarding the inward migrations of Christians into the judgeship of Silistre's countryside in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Firstly, the tax registers of 1569 (the *timar* register BOA TD 483 and the *evkaf* and *emlak* register BOA TD 542) include numerous registrations of Christian *haymanes* (people without prior permanent residence) and *prişeleçs* (newcomers).<sup>146</sup> The 1569 law-code for the province of Silistre also includes specific regulations for "infidel haymanes" (*haymane kafiri*), which would facilitate and guarantee the establishment of permanent residence and the payment of the taxes they owed to their "landlord" and the state treasury.<sup>147</sup> Secondly, one should note the importance of the *waqf* institution and the favorable tax regulations it

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<sup>144</sup> AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 7: 715.

<sup>145</sup> TSVETKOVA 1975: 181. De Pavie, however, does not give details about the size and nature of the animal herds of these families.

<sup>146</sup> Interestingly, the Christian *haymanes* are to be found only in the two mixed (but overwhelmingly Christian) pious endowment villages in the judgeship, Şan (?) Pınarı and Bazergan Pınarı, see BOA TD 542, pp. 60-71. The (Christian) "newcomers" (*prişeleçs*) can be found only in regular (non-*waqf*) Christian and mixed villages, see, for example, BOA TD 483, pp. 218-220, 233-234, 236, 238, 262, 265, 281-282, 293, 312, 332, 339, 438.

<sup>147</sup> AKGÜNDÜZ 1990-, vol. 7: 715, 723.

offered to villagers settled on *waqf* lands, especially in relation to the settlement of Christian *haymanes*, as *waqf* founders and administrators would make special efforts to attract such people to their land holdings to work the land and generate tax revenue. More than 1/3 (752 of 2,093) of the Christian householders in the 1569 registration were registered in the two very large mixed *waqf* villages of Şan (?) Pınarı and Bazergan Pınarı.<sup>148</sup> Lastly, while the available documentary sources do not say anything specific about the geographical origin of these migrants, it is likely that many of them came from other parts of Ottoman Bulgaria that had higher population density, such as north central Bulgaria.

### *The city of Silistre*

As already mentioned, the fortified city of Silistre was the capital and only city in the judgeship of Silistre. While initially conquered by the Ottomans in 1388, it changed hands between the Ottomans and Wallachia repeatedly until 1417, when it was more stably incorporated into the Ottoman domains. Following several more challenges to Ottoman control of the city, it was only after Mehmed II's expedition against Vlad III Țepeş of Wallachia that it came to be under firm and uninterrupted Ottoman control. From that point onwards, it would be a major Ottoman base of operations against Ottoman foes to the north (Poland and Muscovy/Russia) with the governor of Silistre and Ottoman troops from the province playing a prominent role in this context.

The stabilization of Ottoman control over Silistre after 1462 must have had its positive impact, as the Ottoman author Ebu'l-Hayr-i Rumi, who visited the city in 1473 and 1480 described it as a well-maintained Ottoman city in which the Muslims lived in peace and safety.<sup>149</sup>

The first tax register data preserved for the city is from the 1518/1530 registration, according to which the city had a total of 356 households of which 196 were Muslims. 99 of the registered Muslim households were in the fortress (half of whom were Muslim taxpayers who provided service to the fortress in exchange for tax exemptions, and half were garrison officers (*mustafhızan*) who had their own revenue grants (*timars*) in the province).<sup>150</sup> The 97 Muslim households in the city (i.e. outside the fortress) lived in five neighborhoods (*mahalles*) including the neighborhoods of the (congregational) mosque, the one of the *mescid* (small mosque) of Hacı Ömer, and that of Şeyh Nasuh. The 160 Christian households lived in 13 neighborhoods (usually named after the neighborhood's current priest),

<sup>148</sup> BOA TD 542, pp. 60-71, see also footnote 146. On the efforts of *waqf* founders and administrators to bring attract settlers, see also ANTOV 2017: 149-154.

<sup>149</sup> See KİEL, "Silistre," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 37:203.

<sup>150</sup> BOA TD 370, p. 383; for the revenue grants of the garrison officers, see pp. 393-394.

and included small groups with special status such as *ahengers* (blacksmiths), *zenberekçis* (makers of arrow heads), and *martoloses* (auxiliary military personnel), all providing services to the fortress in exchange for tax privileges.

By 1569, the city had grown spectacularly in size (in tune with overall population growth). The number of Muslim households had grown to 808, 163 of which based in the fortress, including six Janissaries, and 645 households in the city proper residing in 18 neighborhoods.<sup>151</sup> There were 633 Christian households in 14 neighborhoods, to which one should add a small Jewish community (18 households) and a small Roma (*çengene*) community (12 households).

### *Conversion and converts to Islam*

As elsewhere in the Ottoman Balkans, conversion to Islam played a visible role in the demographic development of the judgeship of Silistre. One could make a distinction between conversion and converts in urban centers and in the countryside, whereby conversion and converts to Islam in the cities were usually much more prominent, as it was in the cities that contact between Muslims and non-Muslims was more direct and opportunities for the social advancement of new converts to Islam were significant. Converts could easily integrate in the urban Muslim neighborhoods, where they would find other recent converts as well. Cities would also attract converts from nearby villages who would seek to escape the ostracism of their former coreligionists in the countryside. Thus, in similarity to other Balkan cities, converts in the provincial capital Silistre were numerous. Out of 808 Muslim heads of household, 149 (18.5%) were converts, of whom 119 were most likely locals (from the city or the nearby villages), carrying the patronymics of “son of Abdullah” or “son of Abidin,” and 30 were freed slaves, likely having their origins in more distant Christian lands. Just like in other Balkan cities at the time, there were specific neighborhoods, like that of Çarıkçı Ahmed, which had disproportionately high percentage of converts.

While the conversion and converts in the city of Silistre did not differ from most other cities in the early modern Ottoman Balkans, the situation in the countryside was in many ways specific to Dobrudja. Not surprisingly, given the challenges of post-conversion integration that they faced (in mixed villages “new Muslims” would face the ostracism of the overwhelming majority of Christians, and in Turcoman villages, local, usually Slavic-speaking converts would face a significant linguistic and cultural barrier), local converts to Islam residing in mixed and Muslim villages in the judgeship of Silistre were not numerous—281 (out of 7,322 rural Muslim households), or 3.84%. The number and percentage of manumitted slaves, however, was remarkable—516 household heads, or 7.05% of all rural Muslim

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<sup>151</sup> All data for Silistre as of 1569 are based on the city’s registration in BOA TD 483, pp. 239-260.

household heads (for a total 10.89% of converts, locals and manumitted slaves). The high number and percentage of manumitted slaves, who could be seen as cases of “individual forced migration” is to be explained with Dobrudja’s position on the frontier with Christendom, but especially with the participation of troops from the province of Silistre in Ottoman campaigns to the north as well as with the role that the Crimean Tatar Khanate played in the slave trade in the Ottoman Empire as many of the slaves that Tatars would import into the Ottoman Empire could find owners in Dobrudja, before reaching the slave markets of Edirne and Istanbul.

### *Conclusion*

The present essay attempted to delineate some of the most significant aspects of demographic ethno-religious change in Ottoman Dobrudja in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries with special attention paid to the role of migrations and in the context of Dobrudja’s pre-Ottoman historical legacy. Situated on the southwestern edge of the vast Ponto-Caspian steppe, Dobrudja may be described as the steppe land gateway to the Balkans which was thus the subject of numerous, and more often than not demographically destructive, raids and invasions of nomadic peoples from the core Ponto-Caspian steppe (roughly the lands of modern Ukraine) from the antiquity to the late Middle Ages. At the time of the Ottoman conquest in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, Dobrudja was most likely sparsely populated. The turbulent events associated with the Ottoman conquest, especially the rivalry for control over the region between Mircea of Wallachia and the expanding Ottoman state, as well as the challenges posed to Ottoman rule by the Wallachian *voevodes* Dan II in the 1420s and Vlad III in 1461-1462, together with the Crusade of Varna campaigns in 1444-1445 certainly exacerbated certain already long-standing negative demographic trends and led to the further depopulation of Dobrudja, including migrations of Christian populations to the north of the Danube.

Sultan Mehmed II’s 1462 campaign against Vlad III of Wallachia, his and his son Bayezid II’s successful campaigns against Stephen III of Moldavia in the 1470s and 1480s (including the conquest of the strategic fortresses of Kili and Akkirman in 1484), and the bringing of the Crimean Khanate into the Ottoman orbit ca. 1475, led to the lasting political stabilization of the northeastern Balkans, and could thus be seen as watershed events in Dobrudja’s history. The late 15<sup>th</sup>-century political stabilization of the region, which may be seen as the result of both concrete events such as those just mentioned, and the related general rise of the Ottoman imperial centralizing bureaucratic regime, laid the foundations for Dobrudja’s steady re-population. From the late 15<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and largely in contrast to the preceding centuries, Dobrudja came to be the venue of steady inward migrations—of Turcomans coming from Anatolia (and possibly Thrace) as deportees or of their own will, of some Tatars from the northeast (not

discussed in detail in this essay), of prisoners of war from the Christian north and west, as well as of numerous Ottoman Balkan Christians coming most likely from north central Bulgaria. The repopulation of Dobrudja should thus be seen as a part of larger trends in the demographic history of the Ottoman Balkans and beyond, such as the “demographic filling up” of the lowland regions of the eastern Balkans, the overall population growth in the Ottoman Empire and beyond, and some specific aspects of Ottoman centralization (including the Ottoman state’s increasing reliance on non-nomadic armed forces tightly answerable to the center and the application of the *timar* system) as well as the rise of the *waqf* institution, which facilitated the sedentarization of Turcomans and Tatars and attracted numerous settlers, Muslim as well as Christian.

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## Demografske i etno-religijske promjene u osmanskoj Dobruđi (sjevero-istočni Balkan) u 15. i 16. stoljeću i utjecaj migracija

Rad ispituje glavne aspekte demografskih i etno-religijskih promjena u osmanskoj Dobruđi (sjevero-istočni Balkan), od osmanskih osvajanja u kasnom 14. do kraja 16. stoljeća. Imajući u vidu predosmansku povijesnu ostavštinu Dobruđe i koristeći niz narativnih i administrativnih izvora, u radu se raspravlja o njezinoj burnoj političkoj povijesti tijekom 15. stoljeća, što je dovelo do nastavka negativnih demografskih trendova nastalih u predosmanskim stoljećima, poput vanjskih migracija i demografskih gubitaka zbog oružanih sukoba. Politička stabilizacija Dobruđe u kasnom 15. stoljeću dovela je do značajne promjene u demografskim trendovima; od kraja 15. i tijekom 16. stoljeća Dobruđa je postala mjesto unutarnjih migracija Turkmena iz Anatolije i Trakije, kao i kršćana iz drugih krajeva Balkana. U drugom dijelu rada istražuju se demografski rast i stabilizacija Dobruđe u 16. stoljeću na temelju osmanskih poreznih popisa i pratećih zakonika.

*Ključne riječi:* Osmanlije, Dobruđa, Turkmeni, demografske promjene.

*Keywords:* Ottoman, Dobrudja, Turcomans, demographic change.

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INSTITUT FÜR KROATISCHE GESCHICHTE

# RADOVI

# 51

# BROJ 1

ZAVOD ZA HRVATSKU POVIJEST  
FILOZOFSKOGA FAKULTETA SVEUČILIŠTA U ZAGREBU

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