

# 4 Ottoman Rule — (c. 1400–c. 1800)

Macedonia was among the first Balkan lands that the Ottoman empire conquered and integrated into its rapidly expanding realm.<sup>1</sup> Ottoman conquests in the Balkans continued through the last quarter of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth centuries, culminating with capture of the Byzantine imperial capital, Constantinople (Istanbul), at the very end of May 1453.

Before the end of his great reign, Mohammed II, the Conqueror (1451–81), ruled virtually all of the Balkans—in fact, the entire area from the Black Sea to the Adriatic and from the Carpathian Mountains to the Mediterranean coast of Greece. The only exceptions were Slovenia and Croatia (Catholic provinces under the Habsburgs and the Hungarians, respectively), the principality of Montenegro, the city republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), a number of ports in Dalmatia, Albania, and Greece, and a few islands in the eastern Mediterranean.

Mohammed's grandson Selim I (1512–20) turned to the east and across the Mediterranean to North Africa. He captured Syria, extended his empire into Mesopotamia in the east, and established control over Egypt and the Nile valley. His son Suleiman I, the Magnificent (1520–66), secured virtually the entire coast of North Africa and the approaches to the Persian Gulf. He also won the northern shore of the Black Sea and pushed his frontiers into central Europe with conquests in Hungary and several unsuccessful sieges of Vienna.

During Suleiman's long, successful reign, the empire reached its height, as the dominant power on three continents. After his death, however, it began a gradual and, as it turned out, irreversible decline, as a result of a combination of factors, external and internal. Outside the empire, western Europe was going through a transformation that began with the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the scientific and commercial revolutions. It was leaving behind feudal particularism and church domination and moving toward capitalism and centralized, secular, absolutist, monarchical states, which created the basis for the rise of nations and nation-states.

Within the Ottoman empire, however, these revolutionary changes had little impact. Its system of government, which rested largely on the Sacred Law of Islam, proved unable to introduce change, to reform and modernize itself. It could not keep up with the times, did not progress, and stagnated. Indeed, because of degeneration and corruption at the top, the once-efficient centralized administration gradually disintegrated into a stagnant feudal anarchy. The empire of the sultans fell from dominance in Europe under Suleiman the Magnificent to "sick man of Europe" by the late eighteenth century.

Needless to say, the empire's decline had far-reaching repercussions. The rising powers of Europe—first the Habsburgs and then the Romanovs—took advantage of its weakness. By the late seventeenth century, the Ottoman empire was experiencing not military victories and territorial expansion, but defeats and contraction. Equally significant, the weakening of the center and the prevailing anarchy worsened the plight of Balkan Christians. By the late eighteenth century, they felt total alienation vis-à-vis the Muslim-dominated state and lost any vested interest in its survival.

The four-century flow and ebb of Ottoman fortunes, especially in the Balkans, and their impact on Macedonia form the central topics of this chapter. First, we consider the Ottoman administration and the Orthodox *millet* that it created in the Balkans. Second, we look at the empire's roughly two hundred years of expansion and the following two centuries or so of gradual decline. Third, we examine the breakdown of Ottoman rule in the Balkans between about 1600 and 1800. Fourth, we look at Ottoman Macedonia: its changing ethnic composition, its long-standing resistance to imperial rule, its anarchy in the eighteenth century, and the stagnation of its Slavic culture.

## The Ottoman Administration and the Orthodox Millet

In the Balkan lands south of the Danube, the Ottoman conquerors destroyed the former states of the Byzantine Orthodox Commonwealth, their dynasties, their secular ruling elites, and, except for converts to Islam, their land-owning classes. The new rulers integrated all this territory into the Ottoman administrative system and ruled most of it directly from Istanbul (Constantinople).<sup>2</sup>

They also established a distinctive system of government. Their empire was highly centralized and autocratic and centered on the High Porte (or exalted gate, from the Turkish name for the imperial court) in Istanbul. All power resided with the sultan, who was the secular and religious head of state. He was an absolute, divine-right ruler of all his lands and peoples. Even a constitution—which consisted of the Sacred Law of Islam; the Sheri, based on the Koran, the word of God; and the Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet, Mohammed—left the sultan’s administrative authority almost complete and without restriction.

The sultan exercised this authority through the governing class, or “ruling institution,”<sup>3</sup> the administration; and the standing army, which consisted of janissaris (infantrymen) and spahis of the Porte (cavalrymen). All the administrators and soldiers were converts to Islam and slaves of the sultan, who obtained them variously through purchase, taking prisoners in war, and, most notably, the *devshirme* (“to collect”) system—a periodic levy of unmarried Orthodox Christian males between eight and twenty. “[The] sultan had the power of life and death”<sup>4</sup> over this powerful, privileged, slave-manned ruling elite.

The sultan’s highest official—his first deputy—was the grand vizier. Assisting this person was the divan (imperial council), which consisted of the highest officials of both the ruling institution and the Muslim institution, or Ulema—leaders of Muslim law, religion, and education. The divan supervised a vast bureaucracy that ran the central and provincial administrations.

The highly centralized system of provincial government functioned for its first two centuries effectively and efficiently. After 1400 or so, the Balkans, or Rumelia, formed one of the empire’s two large administrative units, along with Anatolia, or the Asiatic part. A *baylerbey*, or lord of lords, headed each. As the empire expanded, Istanbul divided it into sections, which it termed variously *vilayets*, *eyalests*, or *pashaliks*. By about 1600, these units numbered about twenty-five, and each consisted

of lower and smaller jurisdictions, *sanjaks* or *livas*. Heading vilayets were *velis*, and sanjaks, *sanjakbeys*; assisting these officials were administrative staffs. Making up the sanjaks were *kazas*, which consisted of *nahiyes*. The judiciary and the treasury, or tax collection, had separate, territorial organization.

Local authorities cooperated with spahis (cavalrymen), to whom the sultan granted large fiefs (*ziams*) or small fiefs (*timars*) in return for wartime military service. Spahis had clearly defined rights vis-à-vis the Christian peasants, or *rayas*, who worked their lands, as well as duties and obligations toward them and the state.

The autocratic empire was also a theocratic state. It did not recognize or value ethnic, linguistic, racial, and other differences, but emphasized religious divisions. It divided and organized its polyglot population not by ethnic group or previous territorial division, but by religious community, or *millet*. This principle applied to all accepted religious groups. Islam was the dominant religion, and the Muslim millet the dominant community. However, the empire had also a Gregorian Armenian, a Jewish, a Christian Orthodox, a Protestant, and a Roman Catholic millet. The Orthodox Christian was the largest millet in the Balkans.

The system presupposed distinctive and exclusive Muslim and non-Muslim religions. It did not assume equality; it held Islam to be superior. The Muslim faith enjoyed special status and privileges; non-Muslims faced discriminatory political, social, economic, and cultural obligations and restrictions. However, the system tolerated these other religions to a degree that Europe did not. Religious persecution and forced large-scale conversions were rare. Furthermore, the millets enjoyed considerable self-government and autonomy in both temporal and secular affairs.

As we saw above, the Ottoman conquest cost the Balkan peoples their secular ruling elites. Most of the sultan's Christian Orthodox subjects were peasants. Whether Slavs or non-Slavs, and whatever their ethnic group or language, they all belonged to the Orthodox millet. The millet's secular and spiritual head was the patriarch of Constantinople. Mohammed the Conqueror captured Constantinople in 1453, and the next year he chose as patriarch George Scholarios, who as a monk took the name Genadius. The sultan's *berat* to him conferred far greater ecclesiastical and secular powers than the Orthodox Byzantine emperors had ever offered his predecessors. The patriarch became religious head

of the Orthodox church and millet (a *millet bashi*) and secular ruler of all the Orthodox (the *ethnarch*).

The patriarch of Constantinople clearly overshadowed the four other eastern patriarchs, and with the disappearance in 1393 of Tsar Simeon's Bulgarian patriarchate and in 1459 of Tsar Dušan's Serbian patriarchate, his jurisdiction extended even over the Slavic-populated areas. True, the archbishopric of Ohrid, in Macedonia, retained some autonomy and continued as an ecclesiastical center of the Balkan Slavs. And after 1557, when Serbian-born Grand Vizier Mohammed Sokoli (Sokolović) set up the Serbian patriarchate of Peć (Ipek), it took on a parallel role vis-à-vis the Serbs. However, neither the archbishopric of Ohrid nor the patriarchate of Peć was, or claimed to be, equal to Constantinople. Long before 1700 they became powerless, and the patriarchate of Constantinople, effectively in the hands of phanariots (Greek officials in Istanbul) and other wealthy Greek elements, saw to their abolition: Peć in 1766, and Ohrid in 1767.

Constantinople's patriarch was also a high Ottoman official—a vizier and the Orthodox Christians' highest representative in the imperial administration. He controlled all matters of doctrine and the hierarchy of the clergy, all Orthodox churches and their properties, the levying and collection of taxes in the Orthodox millet, and judicial power over the Orthodox in marriage, divorce, and inheritance—indeed, in most civil disputes and in criminal cases that did not involve Muslims.

Most important, however, the Greek-dominated patriarchate had exclusive control over and was responsible for education and cultural and intellectual life in the Orthodox millet in general. The level of education, learning, and intellectual life remained low. The few teachers were priests; the only writings were modest theological works. As L. S. Stavrianos observes: "In place of several Balkan literatures there existed only one Orthodox ecclesiastical literature, written either in a debased classical Greek incomprehensible to most Greeks, or in an archaic Church Slavonic incomprehensible to most Slavs."<sup>5</sup>

## Ottoman Expansion and Decline

During the first two centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans—the empire's golden age—the autocratic and theocratic system worked extremely well. The sultans had devised it to fight successful wars against

the infidel (the Christian west), to extend Islam, to expand the state, and to enrich its coffers. Everyone—Muslim and non-Muslim—had to assist, with special tasks and obligations. Under the all-embracing and all-powerful central government, they did just that, and the empire prospered.

The Balkan Christian peasants, the *rayas*, were a major, perhaps the largest source of revenue for the constant military campaigns. Their situation was not enviable, but not intolerable either. Despite their inferior status, they were much better off and far more secure than their ancestors had been under rapacious, native, landed aristocrats or than their counterparts in Christian Europe.

They might dwell in undivided mountainous areas; on land that belonged to spahis, higher administrative officers, members of the imperial family, or the sultan himself; or on *vakf*—land that supported Muslim religious, educational, and charitable causes. No matter where their homes were, they bore a lighter tax burden than peasants in Christian Europe. Despite regional variations and exceptions, Balkan peasants paid a light head tax to the imperial government; a *tithe*, or a tenth of their produce, to the fief holder or the *vakf*; and some additional, minor levies. They enjoyed hereditary use of their land, which they considered their own.

Furthermore, unlike western European feudal landlords, their Ottoman counterparts could not legally impose feudal services and obligations on peasants and had no legal jurisdiction over them. They could not force them off the land; peasants at least theoretically enjoyed freedom of movement. The clearly defined rights and obligations of the *rayas* received respect and protection as long as the empire waged victorious wars, the central government was strong and in control, and the administration functioned according to established laws, rules, and practices.

However, no imperial power could expand forever; even Ottoman expansion eventually slowed and stopped, before reversing itself. Suleiman I's failure to capture Vienna, his forces' defeat there in 1529, and his long, inconclusive struggle with the Habsburgs revealed a loss of military preponderance in Europe. While for over a century after Suleiman's death in 1566 the Ottoman empire suffered no major defeats, it did not undertake any additional campaigns, and its European expansion ended.

In the late seventeenth century, Europe began to take advantage of the weakened and declining Ottoman empire and went on the offensive.

The Habsburg-led Holy League—an anti-Ottoman coalition of Christian powers, which included the papacy, Venice, Poland-Lithuania, and Russia—defeated the empire’s armies in Hungary, Dalmatia, and the Peloponnesus. The historic Treaty of Karlowitz (Sremski Karlovci) of 26 January 1699 ended the wars of the Holy League. The Ottoman empire ceded to Austria Transylvania, Croatia, Slavonia, and most of Hungary; to Venice, the Peloponnesus and most of Dalmatia; and to Poland, the province of Podolia; it also made concessions to Russia in the Crimea. The Ottoman frontier moved south to the Drava, Sava, and Danube rivers.

Less than three-quarters of a century later, Catherine the Great took the initiative and leadership against the Ottoman forces. Russia won two wars against the Ottoman empire, to many observers the “sick man of Europe.” In the first (1768–74), the Russians scored impressive victories at sea in the Aegean islands off the coast of Asia Minor and on land in Moldavia, Bessarabia, Dobruja, and Bulgaria.

The resulting Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji, on 16 July 1774, represented a massive change for the Balkan peoples. The High Porte made strategic territorial concessions to Russia around the Black Sea, ceded to it the great estuary that the Dnieper and the Bug rivers create, gave it a say in the government and administration of the Danubian principalities Wallachia and Moldavia, allowed it to appoint consuls in the Ottoman lands, and gave its subjects the right to navigate freely in the Black Sea and to trade in the Ottoman empire. As well, the Ottoman empire surrendered for a new, independent state the territories of the Crimean Khan. Most important, it had to recognize Russia as protector of Ottoman Christians, with the right to intervene in Constantinople on their behalf; this principle permitted Russia’s all-too-frequent interventions in the Balkans in the following century.

In Catherine’s second Ottoman war (1787–92), her army defeated Ottoman forces in the Danubian principalities and near the mouth of the Danube. The Treaty of Jassy, 9 January 1792, consolidated Russia’s gains of 1774. The High Porte recognized Russia’s 1783 annexation of the Crimea and gave it the Black Sea shore as far west as the Dniester River. Russia now dominated the Black Sea and became a great power in the Near East.<sup>6</sup>

The Ottoman empire was now weak and in full decline. It lagged behind the European powers politically and militarily and depended on them economically. It little resembled the imperial power of Suleiman I.

Its stagnation and decline, which, as we saw above, had commenced with his death in 1566, resulted from external and internal factors.

Externally, since the Renaissance, the European powers had been advancing, progressing, modernizing; they surpassed and left the Ottoman empire far behind in every respect. Internally, the empire's tradition-bound Muslim ruling elite could not adapt to match the European advances. The empire's military defeats and territorial contraction threw its war machine into disarray. As L. S. Stavrianos points out: "The only way out was a basic reorganization of the imperial institutions, but this proved incapable of realization. The failure of the Ottoman Empire was, in the broadest terms, a failure of adjustment, a failure to respond to the challenge of the new dynamic West."<sup>7</sup>

Internally, the empire stagnated, and by 1700 the once-enviably efficient and effective administration was breaking down. Weak and ineffectual rulers emerged following changes in the succession about 1600. A clique consisting of favorites of the puppet sultan now controlled the administration and exploited the empire for their own benefit or that of the Muslim interests that they represented. The slave system, which underlay the ruling institution, the administration and the military, rested and based itself on training, merit, and service to the faith and sultan, but widespread and unbridled corruption weakened it. Administrative and military posts went no longer to dedicated and deserving converts, slaves of the sultan, but rather to well-connected born Muslims and some Christians who bought offices and exploited them for private profit. In short, the system became corrupt and staffed itself with people who bribed their way into office and sought only personal gain.<sup>8</sup>

### **Ottoman Decline and the Balkans (c. 1600–c. 1800)**

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the decline of the Ottoman empire, the weakening of the central government, and the degeneration of the administration hurt many people, especially non-Muslim, predominantly Orthodox Christian peasants.

The breakdown of the *timar* landholding system, which began with the conquest, hit them hard. As we saw above, this system allowed Istanbul to control the spahis—the service-bound Muslim fief holders—and determined the obligations and protected the rights of the rayas. It provided the latter with security of tenure and some protection from undue



exploitation. By 1600, the system began to break down. The empire was no longer expanding but suffering costly military defeats and, by the late seventeenth century, territorial losses.

Facing financial difficulties, the central government brought some timar land under its own control and taxing powers; courtiers and high officials received land grants as gifts. Furthermore, the shrinkage of the timar lands and the decline in central power and control allowed the spahi fief holders to transform state land into private and heritable property, or *chifliks*. The new owners could do with the land whatever they wished and treat the rayas as they pleased. The result was much harsher tenancy terms, including the landlords' right to evict the rayas and to restrict their movement. This change had no legal or official sanction, but it spread rapidly and by the eighteenth century had become standard.

The Orthodox peasants' worsening economic situation and their harsher treatment by corrupt administrators and fief holders had political repercussions. Some peasants ran away and joined the growing number of bands of outlaws (*klephts* in Greek, *khaiduts* in Bulgarian, *haiduks* in Serbian, and *ajduts* in Macedonian). This movement, which became a feature of the declining empire, increased instability and insecurity throughout the Balkans, especially along major trade routes and around commercial and administrative cities. Peasant rebellions and unrest in general became more frequent; whenever armies of the great powers crossed the Danube or the Pruth rivers and penetrated into the Balkans, peasants supported or even joined them in their fight against their overlords. By the eighteenth century, they began to view Austrian and Russian forces, and during the Napoleonic Wars the French, as armies of liberation.

The conversion of landholding was partly a response to western Europe's growing demand for products such as cotton and corn that grew in the Ottoman empire. Landowners could see financial benefits from exports. Balkan trade with Europe and Russia, largely through Christian merchants, increased after Austria's successes against the Ottoman empire and Russia's expansion to the Black Sea.

This growing commerce stimulated Balkan handcrafts and small-scale industry and the rise of a native middle class, consisting of well-to-do artisans, craftspeople, merchants, and mariners. After 1750, this expanding social element became politically relevant. Its members knew about western Europe's progress and increasingly resented their own



Map 4 Macedonia in the Ottoman Empire in Europe

society’s backwardness and lawlessness. They absorbed secular and democratic western European ideas and would soon join the peninsula’s growing opposition to misrule and oppression.<sup>9</sup>

The system’s degeneration and corruption also hurt the patriarchate of Constantinople and the Orthodox church. Simony began to determine the choice of patriarchs and the highest church officials, and bribery permeated the millet’s operations. By 1700, Phanariotes—“Greeks

who entered the Ottoman service and gained great power and wealth as administrators, tax farmers, merchants and contractors<sup>10</sup>—controlled the patriarchate and through it the millet.

The Greek ethnic element, always a leader in the church and millet hierarchy, gradually assumed complete control; Greek displaced Church Slavonic and became the church's exclusive language in the empire. This development slowed the spread even of limited education and culture to the vast non-Greek majority of Slavs, Romanians, and Albanians under the patriarch's jurisdiction. Hellenization culminated in the abolition of the patriarchate of Peć in 1766 and the archbishopric of Ohrid in 1767. Even the pretense that the patriarch of Constantinople represented all the sultan's Orthodox subjects disappeared. And Hellenization provoked a strong reaction against all Greek influences during the national awakenings that soon followed.<sup>11</sup>

### **Macedonia: Ethnic Transformation, Resistance, Anarchy, and Cultural Stagnation**

After Macedonia's conquest, the Ottoman empire made its entire territory part of the *beylerbeylik* of Rumelia and subdivided it into *sanjaks*. For a long time, the largest part of Macedonia belonged to one of the oldest and largest Balkan sanjaks, the so-called Pasha sanjak. Imperial authorities considered this their most crucial sanjak strategically, and the *beylerbey* of Rumelia administered it personally and directly. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, new sanjaks incorporated Macedonian lands: the Kiustendil, areas of eastern Macedonia, and the Ohrid, parts of the west. In the mid-sixteenth century, the empire set up Skopje (Üsküb) sanjak exclusively on Macedonian lands; the slightly older Salonika sanjak embraced southern Macedonia.

As we saw above, nahias made up the sanjaks and constituted the smallest territorial administrative units. In Macedonia, they normally corresponded to pre-Ottoman *župas*. In parallel with the administrative-territorial division, there were judicial-territorial units, or *kazas*. Each kaza was under the jurisdiction of a *kadi*, a representative of the Ottoman legal system. There were kazas in all areas containing Muslims, and their size depended on the number of Muslims there; frequently they covered several nahias.<sup>12</sup>

The Ottoman conquest and centuries-long rule transformed ethnic

composition and distribution in Macedonia. Some areas, especially those on major strategic routes or where military clashes took place, lost people during the conquest. Many Slav Macedonians there died in battle or became prisoners, some left to escape the onslaught, and others underwent deportation to Albania, Asia Minor, or elsewhere. At the same time, the new rulers forced or encouraged Turks from Asia Minor to settle in Macedonia: along important routes, in fertile river valleys, and in the fertile Aegean plain. Nomads from Anatolia set up a belt of small settlements of livestock breeders near Salonika and in the districts of Nevrokop, Strumica, Radoviš, Kočani, and Oveč Pole in eastern Macedonia.

Conversions augmented Muslim numbers. While the Ottoman empire was generally rather tolerant of other religions, Islamization, sometimes on a large scale, did take place. Some landholding nobles converted soon after the conquest to safeguard or even expand their holdings. Later, during the empire's decline, deteriorating economic conditions led to many conversions in a large number of rayas—even entire villages or districts—in the most eastern and western regions, as well as by some urban dwellers. In towns, conversion often meant linguistic and cultural assimilation as well. New rural Muslims, however, normally preserved their language and many folk and religious customs. Slav-Macedonian converts in the east became "Pomaks," and those in the west, "Torbeši." Both groups survive to the present day.<sup>13</sup>

Even more notable was the fifteenth-century colonization of urban places. Towns became administrative, military, and judicial centers of the new order. They also provided more comfort and safety and attracted a steadily growing number of Muslims. Evidence suggests that until the mid- or late sixteenth century, the Muslim population in larger towns was increasing, and the Orthodox Christian, stagnating or declining. In 1455, Skopje had 511 Muslim and 339 Orthodox households, and in 1519, 717 Muslim and 302 Orthodox. About 1460, Veles had 9 Muslim and 222 Orthodox households, and in 1519, 42 and 247, respectively; in 1476, Kičevo had 31 Muslim and 186 Orthodox households, and in 1519, 111 and 145; and about 1460, Bitola (Monastir) had 295 Muslim and 185 Orthodox households, and in 1519, 750 and 330.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the Inquisition in western Europe, after the late fifteenth century many Jews fled Spain and Portugal and settled in the more tolerant Ottoman empire. Jewish colonies emerged in all major

Macedonian towns—Salonika, Bitola, Skopje, Verroia (Ber), Seres, Kastoria (Kostur), Štip, Kratovo, and Strumica. Salonika’s became one of the empire’s largest and most influential: about mid–sixteenth century, the city had 3,000 Jewish households, the renowned Talmud Torah academy, and a Jewish printing house (1515). Bitola, with 87 Jewish households in 1544, had a Talmudic school as well. In the seventeenth century, Skopje’s Jewish quarter boasted two synagogues and schools.<sup>15</sup>

Opposition against the new Ottoman overlords, who held total power but were completely alien in language and religion, was present from the beginning. During the empire’s zenith, it was passive: individual peasants and entire villages resisted Islamization, and some villages enlarged or built new churches without the requisite approval. Peasants found creative ways to lessen their tax burden or avoided paying taxes altogether. They also discovered methods to beat the “blood tax”—the *devshirme*—and saved their young sons from the sultan’s slave system.

The conversion of timar landholding into *chiflik*, as well as the impoverishment of the *rayas* during the empire’s long decline in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, intensified opposition and provoked armed resistance. As elsewhere in the Balkans, a bandit movement surfaced and grew. Desperate peasants abandoned their fields and fled to the mountains, where they led the lives of outlaws. Macedonians called them “*ajduts*” and their movement “*ajdutstvo*.” The movement became especially widespread in times of war, epidemic, famine, and anarchy, when entire villages joined up. It reached its high point in Macedonia during the seventeenth century.

The *ajduts* usually consisted of bands (*družinas*) of twenty to thirty members, but some bands numbered as many as two or even three hundred. Each band elected a leader—a *vojvoda*, or *arambaša*—for his or her experience, courage, loyalty, and fairness. The bands usually assembled about St. George’s Day (23 April on the old calendar / 6 May, new calendar) and disbanded about St. Demetrius’s Day (26 October / 8 November). A few *ajduts* or bands operated through the winter.

Most *ajduts* were peasants, but some were priests and monks. Moreover, although Slav Macedonians were the most numerous group, there were other people from Macedonia, such as Albanians, Vlachs, and Greeks. Most bands were ethnically homogeneous, but some were mixed. There were women *ajduts* as well; they usually joined a band

together with a husband or a brother, and some became well-known ajdut leaders.

The ajduts attacked and robbed the estates and properties of Ottoman lords and ambushed tax collectors and trade caravans; but they did not spare rich Christian oligarchs and wealthy monasteries. Larger bands also attacked targets in urban centers. For example, they looted the marketplace in Bitola in 1646 and 1661; and records reveal successful incursions into towns such as Florina (Lerin), Resen, and Ohrid. Although the authorities did all they could to eradicate the ajduts, they failed. The ajduts enjoyed the sympathy and, at times, even the protection of Christians at large. The peasants viewed them and romanticized them in Macedonian folk songs, tales, and tradition, as fighters against foreign exploitation and for social justice.<sup>16</sup>

The ajduts also influenced and provided leaders for peasant unrest and rebellions, as in the largest and most significant peasant uprising in Macedonia before 1800. The revolt broke out in mid-October 1689 in the northeast, between Kiustendil and Skopje, under a well-known ajdut vojvoda, Karpoš, and took his name. The immediate cause was the Holy League's success in wars against the Ottoman empire. The Habsburg armies marched southward, penetrated deep into Serbia, reached western Macedonia, and on 25 October 1689 entered Skopje. The complete collapse of the Ottoman administration and the presence of the Austrian army enabled the rebels to take control of the region. They established headquarters in nearby Kriva Palanka, which had been the area's strongest Ottoman fortified position.

Late in the month, Ottoman leaders stabilized their positions and counter-attacked the rebels and the stretched-out Austrian forces with help from seasoned Tartar units of their ally, Selim Girei, khan of the Crimea. They forced the rebels to retreat toward Kumanovo and on the town's outskirts defeated them, capturing Karpoš and many of his fighters and taking them to Skopje. There, in early December and in the presence of Selim Girei, authorities impaled Karpoš by the Stone Bridge (Kamen most) and later threw his body into the Vardar. His death marked the end of the rebellion.<sup>17</sup>

After this victory, a combined Ottoman-Tartar offensive pushed the Austrian forces north, beyond the Danube and Sava rivers. Many Macedonian Christians fled with the Austrians to escape the devastation and Ottoman retribution. Some ended up in southern Russia, where they, like other Balkan refugees, set up military colonies, including a "Mace-

donian Regiment” (Makedonski polk), in the regular Russian army. Muslim Albanian settlers took their place in northwestern Macedonia, changing the region’s ethnographic composition.

The eighteenth century was disastrous for the Ottoman empire and created a multifaceted vacuum in Macedonia. Serious military defeats and territorial losses to European powers occurred as the central government weakened internally and virtual anarchy emerged in the Balkans as local feudal potentates with their own private mercenary armies usurped imperial power. These new overlords terrorized their domains in opposition to the sultan’s government.

In Macedonia, Mahmud Pasha Bushatliya, for example, ran the districts of Ohrid, Debar (Dibra), and Skopje; Ali Pasha Tepelen of Yanina, the southwest; the family of Abdul Aga Shabanderoglou, the Dojran, Petrich, Melnik, and Demir Hisar areas; and the clans of Ali Aga and Ismail Bey, the Seres region. They used their private armies as well as organized units of bandits—four hundred to five hundred men strong and consisting of Albanians and Turks—to terrorize Christians in the countryside and in the towns. Even the *martoloz*i, well-paid Christian recruits in groups of twenty to one hundred, hired to seek and destroy the *ajduts*, exploited the very villages they were paid to protect.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, during the Russian-Ottoman wars, the feared bands of *krđžali* made their bases in the mountains, the Rhodopes, and the Šar, but especially in the Pljačkovica and Ogražden mountains. Their large groups, some numbering two thousand members, consisted of villagers, army deserters, and men and women of various ethnic and religious backgrounds. They rode horses, had ample arms, and in well-planned, rapid attacks on urban centers robbed both wealthy Muslims and Christians.<sup>18</sup>

The prevailing anarchy affected most of all the Christian peasants. As in other Balkan lands, many peasants in Macedonia left their villages in search of greater security. Some went into the mountains and joined *ajdut* bands. Others sought safety in the towns and thus helped gradually to re-Christianize and re-Slavicize the urban centers. There they worked as servants and laborers, practiced various crafts and trades, or engaged in commerce and even finance. They were joining and taking over the direction of some guilds.

Some Slav Macedonians did well, acquired certain wealth, and began the gradual formation of a native middle class in places where

Turks, Greeks, Jews, Vlachs, and, in some cases, Armenians had previously dominated crafts, trades, and especially commerce and internal and foreign trade. Slav Macedonians owned trading houses in Salonika, Kastoria (Kostur), Bansko, Seres, Edessa (Voden), and Ohrid, with representation in Budapest, Vienna, Bucharest, Venice, Odessa, and Moscow. They would assist in the cultural and national awakening of Macedonian Slavs in the following century.<sup>19</sup>

During the centuries of Ottoman rule, Orthodox culture virtually froze in Macedonia and throughout the Balkans. Ottoman Muslim culture, in contrast, flourished; its most visible achievements—architectural masterpieces in the form of mosques, bridges, and hans—still delight visitors, especially in Vardar Macedonia, now the republic of Macedonia.

The Ottoman state had no interest in or influence on the culture of its non-Muslim subjects. The Orthodox rayas were distinct from the dominant Muslims not only in language, religion, and social customs but, virtually until the eighteenth century, also in geography. The Turks resided mostly in towns, which acquired an oriental character, while the mostly peasant Orthodox were overwhelmingly rural. Moreover, except for folk culture in the numerous vernaculars, which people passed on orally, the Orthodox church was the source of all culture. And ecclesiastical culture—teaching, learning, writing, in both the debased classical Greek and the archaic Church Slavonic—was at a very low level; Orthodox intellectual life was stagnant.

Furthermore, throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule, Greeks dominated the Orthodox church. The Bulgarian patriarchate ceased to exist in 1393; the Serbian, in 1459. The autocephalous archbishopric of Ohrid, which Basil II reduced from a patriarchate, continued, and in 1557 Grand Vizier Mohammed Sokoli (Sokolović) saw to establishment of the Serbian patriarchate of Peć (Ipek).

However, neither of these Slavic churches could question, let alone challenge, the Greek-dominated patriarchate of Constantinople. Greeks held the church's highest offices and thus administered the Orthodox millet and helped to run the Ottoman state. Greek influence was predominant, and "Greek became increasingly the language of the Orthodox Church and also of education, which was closely associated with it. There thus developed a type of Greek ecclesiastical imperialism which operated to the detriment of the native elements in the Slavic and Romanian lands."<sup>20</sup>



Greek control over church and education became total after the abolition of the Serbian patriarchate of Peć in 1766 and the archbishopric of Ohrid in 1767. “The Constantinople patriarchate once more reigned supreme in the peninsula. It continued to do so as long as the Balkan peoples remained subject to Ottoman authority.”<sup>21</sup> And Macedonia and the Macedonians were, as we see in Part Two, to remain under the domination of both longer than any other Balkan land or people.

Macedonia’s most significant religious and thus cultural institution was the Ohrid archbishopric. After the Ottoman capture of Ohrid, the authorities permitted this autocephalous church to continue. They did so partly or largely because of traditional animosities that marred its relations with the Constantinople patriarchate and represented to them opposition to Byzantium. Until about 1500, Ohrid expanded its authority in all directions. It took over the Sofia and Vidin eparchies in Bulgaria about 1400 and Walachia, Moldavia, and parts of the former Peć patriarchate, including Peć, at mid-century. For a period, it also held sway over the Orthodox communities in Italy (Apulia, Calabria, Sicily), Venice, and Dalmatia.

However, Ohrid’s territorial jurisdiction began to shrink after 1500, when it lost the metropolitanate of Walachia to Constantinople. In the second quarter of the century, it gave up the metropolitanates of Smederovo in Serbia and Kastoria (Kostur) in Macedonia. After establishment of the Peć patriarchate in 1557, Tetovo, Skopje, Štip, and Gorna Dzhumajia, in a belt across northern Macedonia, broke away from Ohrid and accepted Peć’s jurisdiction. In 1575, the Orthodox of Dalmatia and Venice came under Constantinople, and after 1600 Ohrid lost the eparchies in southern Italy. Thereafter the archbishopric remained stable until its abolition in 1767.<sup>22</sup>

Eight monasteries generated or sponsored most of Macedonia’s limited cultural activity (in the environs of the urban centers in parentheses): Leskovo (near Kratovo), Matejče and St Prohor Pčinški (Kumanovo), Slepče (Demir Hisar), Treskavets (Prilep), Prečiste (Kičevo), Jovan Bigorski (Debar), and Prolog (Tikveš). These monasteries possessed many Church Slavonic manuscripts and continued “copying and reproducing liturgical, philosophical, didactic and other ecclesiastical documents.” Late in the sixteenth century, but more so in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they produced the so-called damascenes, containing translations of various miscellanies from Greek into—and this was new—the Slav-Macedonian vernacular.<sup>23</sup>

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the monasteries also maintained the only schools in Macedonia, which trained clerics. In the seventeenth and eighteenth, they sponsored some elementary Slav-language education outside their establishments. Monks opened schools in some towns, usually near a church, to teach literacy to a small number of boys there. Such monastic (*keljini*) schools existed in Veles, Prilep, Skopje, and some other towns in Macedonia.

Yet Greek schools were emerging much more quickly, with the patronage of Greek or Hellenized metropolitans and bishops. These schools enjoyed the support of the Constantinople patriarchate and of well-to-do Greek and Vlach urban merchants and developed into an extensive network, especially in southern Macedonia. They offered a more up-to-date, advanced, secular education; their example helped spur eventual modernization of the rather archaic monastic Slav schools. More important, they represented and symbolized Greek control of Macedonia's slight educational and cultural life on the eve of the age of nationalism.<sup>24</sup>