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THE OTTOMAN DECLINE AND ITS EFFECTS UPON THE *REAYA*

I. THE SEEDS OF DECLINE IN THE OTTOMAN REGIME

The circumstances in which the villager lived during the final period of Byzantine rule and under the feudal regimes of the Balkans cannot be said to have been better than they were after the arrival of the Ottomans. Before the Ottoman conquest villagers who lived on *pronija* lands, those belonging to monasteries or feudal lords, were subjected to a variety of burdensome demands upon their labor. The so-called *paroikos* was obliged to render to his *seigneur* one wagonload each of wood, hay, and straw every year and was bound also to do wagon service and work for the *seigneur* two or three days every week. Even before the Ottoman period there was a tendency in maritime zones where a cash economy had developed or in the zones surrounding larger towns, towards the acceptance of a cash tax of a certain amount in place of these services, resulting, just as in Western Europe, in a loosening of the personal bonds which tied the villager to his *seigneur*. In general this tendency was welcome not only to the *seigneur*, who had a need for cash, but also to the villager, provided that he was in a position where he could obtain cash. This development was accelerated with the establishment of the Ottoman centralized regime. Although the older labor services were allowed to survive in certain areas, the Ottomans generally eliminated the labor services and replaced them with a single clearly-defined tax of 22 *akçes*, called the *çift resmi* or 'yoke tax', which was a specific sum paid by each villager once a year in place of the eliminated labor services. There is no doubt that this taxation policy eased the way for the Ottoman takeover.

In harmony with the traditional view of the state throughout the Middle East, the land and those who worked it were regarded by the Ottomans

as belonging to the sultan himself. This direct control was regarded as one of the great principles upon which the state was based. With it in mind the Ottomans abrogated every sort of personal feudal bond and kept under vigilant control, subject to law, every sort of local military and legal authority and everything which might be exacted from the villager. Those to whom the *padişah* delegated his authority, primarily the provincial *beys* and their local lieutenants as well as the judges whose duty it was to oversee and guarantee enforcement of the law, kept each other under control as countervailing forces and stayed in continuous written contact with the central authority. The PRIME DUTY of the central government was to protect the subject from abuses of authority by local figures. Nonetheless, in every period there was evidence pointing to abuses of authority by those to whom it was delegated. We can see that when the central authority was weak and financial crises were endemic, these abuses widened and worsened to the point that they threatened the very constitution of the Empire. Nor can we overlook the fact that, under the *timar* system, certain rights over the lands and villagers were reserved to the military personnel to whom they were assigned and that in spite of all the intended limitations and attempts at control, these delegated rights were liable to abuse. As a start, let us take a glance at the labor services which were imposed upon the *reaya*, the term used for villagers, be they Christian or Moslem.

According to a law dating from the end of the 15th century, the *reaya* were obliged to transport the tithe belonging to the *sipahi*, the cavalryman set over them, to a granary or a fortress garrison. Moreover, if the cavalryman wished it, villagers had to transport this tithe to the nearest market. But in no instance were villagers supposed to carry produce more then a distance of one day. The *reaya* had to reap hay for the *sipahis* but were not obliged to transport it. But in spite of these limitations, there often were complaints that *sipahis* assigned to the land were using the *reaya* animals and wagons for their own benefit. One more labor service recognized by law was the *reaya*'s obligation to build a granary for the village cavalryman. Apart from this, however, *reaya* were not supposed to be forced to build a house or do anything else for the *sipahi*. One of the more onerous labor services was, of course, the *reaya*'s obligation to work on land reserved for the *sipahi*'s own profit. The *sipahi* of each *timar* had his own special fields, called *hâssa çiftlik* or his own *hâssa* orchard and vegetable garden which had to be worked by the peasants. Ottoman law limited this sort of service to three days in a year.

Subsequently this form of labor service was usually commuted into a cash tax of three *akçe* annually per villager, and the fields reserved for the cavalrymen were rented by him to the villagers. When Cyprus was taken by the Ottomans, they converted the two days of service per week by the *paroikos*, or serf, into one day of service per week in the sugar refineries belonging to the government. But it was not long before this was completely eliminated. Also in force was a custom surviving from older times by which one out of every fifty herders was supposed to render service to a *sanjak bey* (governor) for a period of six months. However, this service was also completely eliminated in 1536. The State serfs, called *ortakçı kullar*, who in the 15th century were drawn in limited numbers from war prisoners, merged completely with the regular *reaya* in the 16th century. Thus those forms of service which were at variance with the principles of the Ottoman system died out.

Another matter which always resulted in complaints by the *reaya* was the practice of obliging the villagers to feed without compensation the soldiers and officials who happened to visit their village along with their animals and all those who accompanied them. To combat this, the State came to place a limit of three days upon the length of time which a *sipahi* might alight in a village within his *timar*. The Ottomans tried to ease the situation of the villager by requiring that these visits be as infrequent as possible, that the visitor take as few people as possible with him and that he pay for everything received from the villager.

A worse form of abuse was the illegal requisition of the villager's grain, livestock, and cash reserves, a practice called *salma* or *salgun*. Normally it was resorted to by high ranking officials and military officers and involved a request for a certain amount of the goods in question from each village household. For this sort of thing, the expression *tekâlîf-i şâkka*, or 'onerous levies', was used. We know too that the central government sometimes issued special orders which permitted a general or commander to resort to this sort of requisition. Those who carried out unauthorized requisitions were severely punished in periods when the central authority was strong, but in the period of decline these arbitrary requisitions came at the head of the list of the abuses which stripped the villagers and ruined the country.

One more field for abuses lay in the widespread application of the practice by which the Ottoman administration allowed government officials to collect various forms of income directly from the *reaya* to make up their salary. In order to prevent abuses, the Ottomans carefully specified in their laws the kind and the amount of tax to be gathered, and

the time of gathering. The practice found its widest application in the *timar* system, in which the *sipahi* collected for himself dues and taxes established by law. Each such *timar* had a known income. So that this income would neither diminish nor be lost, the government granted the *sipahi* a right to use part of the land himself, and also a number of means to control the lands worked by the *reaya*. Naturally, *sipahis* did not shrink from abusing the exercise of this delegated authority. Income from the larger *timars*, called *hâss*, which were assigned to commanders and governors, was either gathered by farming it out to individuals or by means of agents or collectors (*voyvodas*).

Apart from the *timar* system, the law permitted the collection of certain taxes from all *reaya* in return for services which officials performed directly for them. A tax collector, for instance, took for himself a certain fee from each household. Judges took standard fees for legal documents prepared for the *reaya* or when they made judgements on inheritance matters. Only when the central government effectively operated its system of controls was it able to keep at a minimum the abuses arising from this sort of delegated authority.

Finally, we must touch upon those abuses which arose from the operation of the tax farming system (*iltizam*) which existed from the earliest times of the Ottoman empire. This system operated through the sale of state income sources, such as those coming from *timar* or *hâss* lands, to private persons at ever higher prices. The state contracted to turn over such collections to the tax farmers, who each time promised to deliver more; it thus was able to increase indefinitely the tax revenues to be collected. The activities of tax farmers were controlled by a state appointed commissioner, called *emin*. But despite this, most of them managed to get out of the *reaya* just as much as they could, and it must not be forgotten that the State's own military forces assisted the tax farmer in making his collections. The Ottomans knew of the shortcomings of this system, and to the extent that it was possible endeavored to limit its operation and prevent its abuse; but starting from the latter half of the 16th century it both expanded and degenerated, due largely to the concurrent decay of the *timar* system. No better method other than the tax farming system remained for the collection of these revenues once the *timar* holdings, instead of being in the hands of *sipahis* living in their assigned villages, passed into the hands of influential parties living in Istanbul or other cities, or on the other hand, once they were attached directly to the treasury. The tax farming system spread so far that even judges began to lease to substitutes the courts within their jurisdiction,

with each court being a means of income through the dues collected in the judge's name. Anyone leasing a court for its proceeds was of course bound to get involved in bribery. In similar fashion all state positions, all instruments exercising state-delegated authority, came to be means for personal gain. As the central government fell into an embarrasing financial position, it began to sell posts and delegate authority to the highest bidders regardless of qualifications. At the same time one must not forget that bribes were also received by those who vouched for appointees. In all cases, it was the *reaya* who in the end paid for these ever pyramiding bribes.

So here we have the seeds of ruination which the Ottoman State carried within it. According to the traditional view of the state in the Middle East, chief among the factors which kept a government viable was its success in protecting *reaya* from abuse and tyranny, since the impoverishment or dispersion of the *reaya* masses would result in the diminution of a State's sources of income, and a State without income could not survive. Imbued with this belief, the early Ottoman statesmen endeavored to prevent abuses and to make these measures work. But from the 1570's onward, as central authority weakened, they were no longer capable of doing this and the entire system declined.

II. EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE GOVERNMENT CORRUPTIONS: THE JUSTICE DECREES (ADALETNAMELER)

The 'justice decrees' are undoubtedly the Ottoman sources which reflect most authoritatively the administrative corruption which developed during the period of decline. A 'justice decree', or *adaletname*, is a decree of the *padishah* in the form of a manifesto which strongly forbids behavior contrary to law and justice, or any misuse of authority affecting the *reaya* by those who exercised authority in the name of the state.

The 'justice decree' sent to the commander-in-chief of Anatolia and to the district commanders and judges in 1595 on the occasion of the accession of the Sultan Mehmed III describes with an unprecedented explicitness the confusion which then for the first time prevailed within the Empire and the widespread abuses which accompanied it. After making clear that laws and regulations originating in the period of Süleyman the Lawgiver were being trampled underfoot and that dues and taxes extracted from the *reaya* had swollen by virtue of a host of unlawful innovations, it goes on to list the principal abuses of the day as

follows: (1) *Vizir*, commanders-in-chief, and their agents in the provinces — the collectors, the other commanders, the bailiffs (*subaşıs*), the property administrators and private trustees, as well as supervisors (*kâhyas*) in villages (positions which had been given to palace favorites), state collectors and tax farmers, and judges' substitutes — had all been making rounds in the provinces, frequently accompanied by ten or fifteen cavalrymen, and after alighting in the villages they would oblige the *reaya* to feed them and their animals free of charge, and by misusing their authority would collect money in an unwarranted fashion. (2) *Sancak Beys*, district commanders, and *subaşıs*, bailiffs responsible for the peace and security of their zones, were collaborating with brigands instead of catching them. (3) Individuals from the various regular forces maintained by the central government *kapı-kulu*, or at least individuals who pretended to be such, had been going around in groups to villages and towns to rob the *reaya* causing the *reaya* to flee and scatter. The 'justice decree' adds that because of this oppression the *reaya* were abandoning their villages and scattering. This decree was published on the eve of Mehmet III's major expedition against the Hapsburgs.

Here we must pause for a moment to give attention to the *kapı-kulu* groups calling themselves government regulars who descended upon the people at that time. The beginning of all this dates to the last years of Süleyman's reign. At that time, because of the competition for the throne which was going on, worrisome pockets of resistance had arisen *vis-a-vis* the central government. One contender for the throne, Prince Bayezid, attracted freebooters coming mostly from the villages of Anatolia, and from them he founded a personal army, promising that if he acceded to the throne he would take them into the regular forces, or *arkapı kullar*. After Bayezid passed from the scene, the Ottoman government put this Anatolian soldiery on the payroll because of their skill with firearms, and used them during the wars in Iran (1578-1590) and Hungary (1593-1606), increasing their numbers steadily. These forces, which bore the name of *Sarıca* or *Sekban*, got into the habit of living off the people of Anatolia during periods when the government was not paying their wages by means of requisitions of their own invention, burning, plundering and killing in villages and towns which did not give in to their demands. To these the Ottoman statesmen gave the name *jelâli*, *eşkiya*, or 'rebels'. Most of them purported to be janissaries or regular army men and appropriated for themselves the privileges that went along with such status. On the other hand, the real janissaries and regular army men who had settled in cities and towns used what authority they had to intimidate and exploit

the people around them, thus making themselves into a privileged socio-economic group. This situation thrust Anatolia into anarchy. Some of the people fled to Rumeli and to other surrounding regions. After 1603, when Iran became the aggressor and the Ottoman forces in Azerbaijan were withdrawn to Anatolia, the situation took on the proportions of a catastrophe. The confused scattering of the masses of villagers who fled Anatolia to save themselves from the *celalis*, was called the *Büyük kaçgun*, the 'Great Flight'.

The 'justice decree' published by Ahmet I in 1609 reflects the grave circumstances of the time. The Anatolian and Rumelian commanders-in-chief and district commanders and judges are told:

> You are not making the rounds of your provinces doing your duties. Instead you are going around taking money from the people unlawfully. And it has been brought to my attention that during these so-called 'patrols' which you are making for this purpose accompanied by unnecessary numbers of cavalrymen you are committing the following abuses: If somebody falls out of a tree you make this out to be a murder, you go to a village, settle down, and in order to rout out the supposed killer you harrass the people by putting them in irons and beating them. Finally besides taking hundreds of gold or silver pieces as 'blood money', you collect from the villager free of charge as a so-called 'requisition' horses, mules, slaves, barley, straw, wood, hay, sheep, lambs, chickens, oil, honey and other things to eat. You lease out your incomes to collectors at excessive rates. They on their part go out to collect with far too many horsemen and instead of satisfying themselves with collecting your incomes according to law and as is prescribed in the record, try to get as much money as they please. And besides the normal villages, they go onto imperial holdings, which are immune, under the pretense of following criminals and demand thirty or forty extra gold or silver pieces per month. And because you, you commanders and bailiffs, have been taking money from brigands and letting them off rather than giving them their just deserts, brigands have been getting hold and have been descending upon the people in groups. This is the sort of tyrannizing that I have been hearing about.

The decree continues:

> The object in appointing you commanders-in-chief and district commanders and in giving you incomes is not to have you go around collecting goods and ruining the country. Rather, it is so that the holy law and the government's laws be respected, so that no one be allowed to tyrannize, so that individuals who cause trouble will be taken in hand and if necessary imprisoned and handed over to the government, or if necessary to get punishment executed according to the decision of the local justice and in this way to protect the country by every means and to make it prosper and flourish. To take from the *reaya* a tithe of blood money belonging to the victim's relatives, calling it 'blood tithe', is contrary to law and forbidden. Commanders who descend on a village with two or three hundred horsemen in order to get a blood tithe are causing the ruination of that village.

In the same justice decree we find information on abuses by judges:

> Judges and judges' surrogates have been going around from village to village together with bailiffs on the pretext of judging wrongdoers in the villages or seeing to other legal work and have been taking sheep, chickens, oil, honey, barley, straw and wood from the *reaya* without paying for them.

> Judges had the authority to take a fee of fifteen or twenty parts in a thousand in inheritance cases, but instead, they had been interfering into inheritance matters without being invited and without its being necessary and had made it a rule that people must get permission from them before the dead could be buried.

> They have been denying permission for the burial of non-Muslims unless they get some money. When they make the rounds of the villages they have been going around to the graveyards, counting graves and fining those who have buried their dead without permission. And they have been committing various abuses in the settlement of inheritances. They have been raising appraisals of the value of goods in order to raise the tax they take, or have been making inheritance settlements a second time claiming that the first settlement was unjust. In this way the majority of inheritance goods have been adjudged two or three times and as a result a large part of these goods end up in the judges' hands in the form of a fee.

> From time to time the central government appointed judges as inspectors in order to establish the reasons for confusion in this or that district or in order to hear the complaints of the *reaya*. Judges abused these missions for the purpose of robbing the people: they went around from village to village judging people who were innocent of any wrongdoing and then taking bribes for crimes which did not exist.

> Judges have not hesitated to interpret the decrees of His Majesty the Sultan according to their own advantage. If anyone tries to find out how the decree actually runs, they accuse him of the crime of opposing that decree and thus get money out of him.

> Again according to the aforesaid justice decree, judges who were in the process of making up tax registers deliberately overstated the number of those who were liable to taxes to extort bribes from them. Judges were taking fees higher than the law allowed on documents and copies of documents which the *reaya* received from the courts. Also judges had been ignoring clear instructions contained in imperial decrees with regard to *timars* or religious posts by issuing documents awarding them to whichever claimant gave the most bribe money. Judges, who had the

right to appoint surrogate judges in their own jurisdictions, were dispensing these positions to whoever gave the most money. These in turn went out to harrass the *reaya* in order to collect various taxes and on those visits they forced the villagers to feed their numerous companions free of charge.

The same justic decree touches upon abuses by hoodlums, both military and non-military. This sort of individual would dispense some little thing to the *reaya* as a so-called gift — a knife, a skullcap, or a bar of soap — and afterwards would demand in return from each village family a sheep, a beehive, or two or three measures of wheat. In general soldiers did this sort of thing in order to fulfill their needs. Others of these strong arm soldiers would buy goods cheaply as they went into a town and then sell the same goods at a high price inside the town and in that way exploit the people.

Finally this justice decree depicts what a social blight the usurers had become for the villager. The *reaya*, left penniless by the lawless extortions of the military, were obliged to take money from usurers, the rate of usury going up to fifty percent. The *reaya*, unable to pay off this ever increasing debt load, were obliged to work for the usurer and become little more than his slaves. It was always easy for the usurer to have anyone opposing him thrown into jail.

III. THE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

The deterioration of order in the Empire was already being cited by historians of the late 16th century such as Selânikî and Âlî. In the 17th century, Koçi Bey laid out the reasons for the Ottoman decline in sharp clear lines in his representations to Sultan Murad IV (1623-1640). And already in the 1610's an Ottoman author who concealed his identity dwelled on the same points in his *Kitab-i Mustatab*. Both writers assert that the authority of the sultan had weakened and broken down. In olden times, the grand vezir, acting as the sultan's right hand, secured order and unity in administration and maintained the state's interests above all other considerations. Now, they said, palace favorites and irresponsible individuals were interfering in the use of this authority, thrusting the administration into confusion and using their influence to fill their own pockets. Bribery was widespread. Palace favorites were handing out leases and posts as they pleased and taking money for it. Also very important, these favorites were having *timar* and *hâss* lands

assigned as their own farms and as a result the *sipahi* forces living on the land were greatly reduced. For this reason it had been necessary to increase the other regular forces, especially the janissaries, and because these got their wages from the central treasury, the load on it had become excessive. Therefore the state was obliged to lay heavier taxes upon the shoulders of the *reaya*. One result of the increase in the remaining regular forces was that the latter was becoming rebellious and unmanageable both in the capitol and in the provinces. Both writers considered the decline to be a consequence of the degeneration and abandonment of the classic laws and regulations of the Ottoman State. According to them, in order to straighten out the situation, it would be necessary for the sultan's authority to be concentrated in the hands of the grand vezir, for the *reaya* to be protected from abuses, for the *timar* system to be reformed, for the number of janissaries to be reduced and discipline restored in the army, and for the practice of taking bribes to be eliminated absolutely.

The similarity between these views and the kind of thinking we see in the justice decrees is striking. No doubt there is a lot of truth in this thinking, which conforms to a traditional view of state and society by attributing decline to corruption. But the modern historian sees more in the Ottoman decline than administrative failings and corruption. Population increase accompanied by economic stagnation, and the destructive financial and political consequences of long years of war with Iran and in Hungary are accepted among the valid deep-running causes. Here we shall pause to discuss them.

It has been established that the population of the Ottoman Empire increased two-fold during the 16th century just as was the case in other Mediterranean lands. The Ottoman government was not able to send this excess population into conquered territories as in the past when compulsory deportations, called *sürgün*, played a large role in the Turkicization of certain parts of the Balkans. The last time this kind of deportation had been resorted to as a systematic effort had been following the conquest of Cyprus when landless villagers from central Anatolia were sent to the island. But now the great conquests in Europe had come to a halt.

At the same time the Ottoman economic system was not suitable to the task of securing new economic resources at a rate even with the population increase, a condition which I have attempted to demonstrate in a study on capital formation in the Ottoman Empire (see Bibliography). The Ottoman State was intrinsically bound to the corporation

system typical of the Middle Ages. Here the principles found their place in the religious law of pre-Ottoman Islamic states under the name of *ihtisab* or *hisba*. Under this system, an industrial development capable of utilizing the increasing masses of workers in the cities was impossible. The concept then current among the mercantilist elite of West Europe held that industrial development and the exportation of goods enriched a country, but this concept was utterly foreign to the Ottomans. In the Ottoman economic system only in commerce was there any encouragement for the investment of capital. There did indeed exist a capitalist-minded class of traders in the 16th century, but changes in world trade routes at the end of that century and the beginning of the 17th began to take their toll on the Ottoman market with the result that the mercantilist states of the West were enabled to surbordinate the Levant to their own economic systems. Moreover, due to the fact that the English and the Dutch gained a supremacy in the Mediterranean, the Ottomans lost the upper hand at sea even in their own waters. Thus the advantages which could have been obtained by the Ottomans from the East-West or North-South trade were lost.

One more development of greatest significance can be seen in the great financial and economic crisis which befell the Ottomans following the 1580's. In Western Europe silver fell in value with reference to gold and it began to infiltrate the markets of the Levant. In the Ottoman markets now it was not the Ottoman *akçe* but the Spanish *reale* and the Dutch *rixdal* which prevailed. All the consequences which the 'price revolution' had brought in its train in Europe were experienced equally in the Ottoman Empire. The loss in value of silver money caused prices to jump to twice what they were. Counterfeit money flooded the market while speculation and soaring interest rates turned the finances and the economic existence of the state upside down. All of this upset the state's old establishments and institutions. The new circumstances opened the way for unpleasant incidents and frequent revolts by groups with fixed incomes, particularly the janissaries and other standing forces who subsisted on a small daily wage. This financial chaos had to be counted as one of the basic reasons for the confusion and slippage which became apparent after the 1580's.

The situation was not only the underlying cause of the military rebellions at the center but also of the attempts by military groups in the provinces to squeeze more money out of the *reaya*. *Timar* holders whose incomes had been cut in half were so impoverished that they were unable to make their way to the battlefields of the Hungarian and Iranian wars

and were instead robbing the *reaya*, avoiding campaigns and abandoning their holdings. Commanders and judges were resorting to bribes and abuses in order to hold their incomes level in the face of ever more costly living conditions.

The central government too was sharply aware of the insufficiency of its older fixed income. The continuous need for meeting the heavy expenses of long wars made its financial crisis ever more severe. Lowering the amount of silver contained in the *akçe* as a counter measure simply opened the way to more confusion. The government often was forced to resort to collecting extraordinary levies for the treasury (*âvâriz-i divâniyye*) a practice which formerly had been saved for only the most unusual circumstances. These levies became a regular cash tax collected year in and year out from villager and townsman alike. Gradually the amount of the tax rose. It was about 250 *akçe* per household in 1590 while the usual taxes were maintained. The principal traditional taxes were: *Ispenje*, 25 *akçe* for an adult male; tithes of usually one-eighth from each kind of crop, garden and orchard; 2 *akçe* for each one thousand square meters; pig-tax and sheep-tax, one *akçe* for each two; and fines and occasional dues grouped under the names of *badihava* and *niyabet*. Our calculation based on the *defters*, Ottoman surveys, showed that the average tax burden per household was about 250 *akçe*, which was equal to four gold florins by 1580 and only two florins in the early 17th century. Thus an increase of a hundred per cent in the amount of taxes was not real in value. The same was true for *jizye*, poll-tax. It was usually one gold florin which the Christian *reaya* had been bound to pay yearly but now it was raised to conform to the new value of the *akçe*. In the middle of the 16th century, when the gold florin exchanged for sixty *akçe*, the polltax varied between 40-60 *akçe*, whereas by the beginning of the 17th century the tax amounted to 140 *akçe*. About the same time the government announced that the official exchange value of a gold florin was 120 silver *akçe*. But the rate for gold was always 10-20% higher on the free market. At any rate in the countryside where the effects of the monetary changes were slow and incomplete the new *avâriz-i divâniyye* taxation was felt as a heavy burden by the *reaya*. And, as we have already pointed out there were many other abuses committed in the collection of these taxes. Under these conditions the situation of the Balkan villagers became drastically worse.

IV. THE VILLAGER AND THE LAND: THE ADVENT OF LARGE ESTATES

When a villager had become saddled with an impossible tax burden his only choice was to abandon his land and move. Such villagers, wandering on the loose, show up in the records as *haymana* or '*reaya* left out of the record' (*defter harici reaya*); often their trails were lost and they settled in other regions altogether. Naturally some of them turned to brigandage which constituted one of the chief headaches of government. The passive resistance by the villagers was a most effective factor in forcing the central government to condemn abuses and to take measures to lighten taxes. Now influential people among the military were appropriating lands abandoned by the villagers and settling on them by bringing slaves and hirelings to work them, thus converting them into their own estates. Because of the general shortage of labor, lands of this sort were generally used for livestock raising, thus becoming veritable ranches. After the confusion died down, the *reaya*, dreading these soldiers, found it impossible to return to their old villages. Although the sultan often demanded that the houses and stables of these military interlopers be torn down and that these soldiers quit their holdings immediately, such orders were rarely obeyed.

There were three main modes by which the great estates of Rumeli came into being in the 16th and 17th centuries:

1. *Estates established on unused land*

Rich and influential individuals would buy for cash land which was not officially registered in the tax registers or which was not being worked, then would settle slaves on it and make it into their own estate. In the records, one notices that private estates were generally established on lands to which the state had not previously laid claim and that they utilized slave labor instead of *reaya* labor. *Reaya*, working for wages on these estates as farm laborers, called *irgad*, are those who had fled their own lands and were left out of the tax surveys. Starting from the 17th century this kind of *reaya* constantly increased. Because of the confused way in which tax registers were maintained at this time it became easier to get state land through bribery and add it to a private estate or for the *reaya* to sell their fields and enter the service of the estate owners. According to citations from the Edirne region dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, a large part of the estates there were established in this manner and were generally turned over to animal raising. The animals

were sold to the villagers while the grain which was raised was sold either directly or by circuitous routes to European merchants who paid good prices in return. Under these conditions, large estates developed and became numerous. Most of the estate owners were military men by origin. They often lent money to villagers, who then lost their fields because they were unable to pay these debts. With some local differences the same conditions can be identified in other parts of Rumeli.

2. *Trust estates (vakf) founded by turning State Land into Property*

Influential figures from the palace or close to palace circles got hold of state lands in the form of property grants and subsequently turned them into trusts, thus giving rise to plantation-like establishments. This sort of trust-estate was not unknown in the older periods, but to the extent that central authority and control loosened in the decline period this style of converting state land into property and *vakf* increased proportionally. There was no great difference between these trust estates and the other big estates just described from the point of view either of their management or even their basic purpose. A large part of their rent went either to the trust founder personally or to his family. Slave labor and animal raising were widespread. Estates and trust establishments in the hands of the powerful were generally free from the interference of local governors and for this reason it is understandable why fugitive *reaya* generally settled on them. But once they did that, the *reaya* were bound tightly to the trust or the estate.

3. *Estates Founded by Renting State Lands*

Because the treasury rented out on a rent-lease basis (*mukataa*) the *timar* and *hăss* lands belonging to the state, rich and influential individuals were enabled to take control of many villages and farms. Owing to the treasury's difficulties in the era of decline, rent-lease contracts began to be made out on a life-term basis, sometimes even on a hereditary basis, so that they became virtually like private property. Originally the lessor was the villager who now was regarded as leasing the land hereditarily and eternally from the holder of the *timar* or *hâss*. Under this arrangement the villager paid taxes and dues fixed by law to the *timar* or *hâss* holder and in theory was not obliged to pay anything else. Under the new system, where a whole class of rich and influential landlords inter-

vened between state and *reaya* and obtained the rights to the usufruct of the soil, the villager was obliged to pay a separate rent to them in ADDITION to the taxes due to the state. The majority of the new leaseholders were again of military origins. Landlords who had succeeded in obtaining lease rights to extensive holdings were eventually entrusted with a number of functions, such as gathering taxes, raising troops, and keeping order, thus ushering in the era of the *âyâns*. But this era only reached its full development in the second half of the 18th century. Thus the state allowed its control, even its sovereign rights over the *reaya*, to grow weaker, demonstrating that the classic regime associated with the Ottomans had completely broken down and that the Empire had become feudalized.

There is one other important development which took place at the same time in which the great landlords and notables (âyâns) were making their appearance: This came about as the state left to communities of villagers and townsmen the collection of certain taxes and their delivery to the treasury; or to put it another way the communities took on the task of farming taxes. As a result, an individual who headed such a community gained some control over it. At the same time the community took on an organization which began to function in ways other than the collection of taxes. The Ottoman government used this method in many districts both to defend the interests of the treasury and of the *reaya* from the rapacity of the officials and tax farmers. And in fact the *reaya* would promise more than the tax farmer precisely in order to secure the application of this other system, which was called *maktûa bağlamak* or *maktû 'iyyet*. This *maktû 'iyyet* system was applied especially in Balkan Christian zones for the collection of the poll tax (*jizye*). By giving the Christian communities an opportunity for some kind of organization this system actually provided a means and prepared the ground for future action on their part against the Ottoman regime.

For all these reasons, we can verify that, starting from the 1590's, the *reaya* under Ottoman rule, including the Christian *reaya* of the Balkans, fell into far worse circumstances than had formerly prevailed. As a result, dissatisfaction spread among the *reaya*, and brigandage increased. This situation contributed to the rebellion of Michael, Prince of Wallachia, starting in 1594, the first large scale reaction to the Ottoman regime in the Balkans; and to the resulting reverberations which this created south of the Danube. Nor can one forget the upsurge of rebellious activity in the mountainous parts of Albania in the same period nor the fact that the

Serbs, Greeks and Albanians were making contact with foreign powers in opposition to the Ottomans.

Systematic archival research to uncover the precise forms which the Ottoman decline took in the Balkans is still in its beginning stages. To this end there is a great need for detailed studies on changes within the framework of village life, the spread of brigandage and its causes, migrations and the reasons for them, the circumstances leading to the formation of landed estates, and changes taking place in town life.

On the other hand it should not be forgotten that in the beginning years of the period of decline Rumeli was not as deeply affected as Anatolia. Recent studies have suggested that an acceleration in trade relations between Rumeli and Europe had a positive effect upon the circumstances of the *reaya*.

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DIE PATRIARCHALE ALTKULTUR UND DER WEG ZUR NEUKULTUR

Die Kultur der Balkanvölker, ihre Genesis und Struktur ist in kulturmorphologischer Hinsicht durch folgende, landschaftlich variierende Merkmale charakterisiert:[1]

I. *Die kontinuierliche Bewahrung bzw. Regeneration* der patriarchalen Altkultur, in den zentralbalkanischen verkehrsfernen Gebieten, so im Sandschak, in Nord-Albanien, in den Rhodopen bis in das 20. Jahrhundert hinein. *Wesen und spezifische Manifestationen dieser Altkultur*: In dieser archaischen Sozialstruktur mit dem gentilen Gesellschaftsaufbau in Großfamilien, Sippen, Bruderschaften und Stämmen (tribus, clans), mit den sozialen und kulturellen Äußerungsformen wie z.B. der Blutrache, des Brautraubs, des Brautkaufs, des Brigantentums serbischer, kroatischer, bulgarischer, albanischer, rumänischer, griechischer Freischärler; mit der traditionellen Gastfreundschaft und künstlichen Verwandtschaft (pobratimstvo), mit der Funktion rechtlicher, sozialer und religiöser Bräuche an Stelle von staatlichen und kirchlichen Gesetzen, mit der mythischen traditionsgebundenen Welthaltung in Lied, Sage, Volksglaube, Volkskunst, — sind die Geschlechts- und Fortpflanzungsverhältnisse und -beziehungen entscheidend. Ihre Institutionalisierung garantiert beim Fehlen bzw. geringer Wirksamkeit staatlich-politischer Herrschaftsformen die Stabilität und die Kontinuität der Gesellschaft. Am Balkan sind demnach die horizontalen Verwandtschafts- und die

[1] Zum Gesamtkomplex Details mit weiterer Einzelliteratur: *Völker und Kulturen Südosteuropas. Kulturhistorische Beiträge.* (= *Südosteuropa, Schriften der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft* 1. Bd., München 1959, 284 S., insbesonders die Beiträge von Balduin Saria, Franz Dölger, Günther Reichenkron, Alexander V. Soloviev, Franz Babinger, Josef Matl); ferner: *Die Kultur Südosteuropas, ihre Geschichte und Ausdrucksformen*, Wiesbaden 1964 (= *Südosteuropa-Schriften*, 6. Bd.). Für das Gebiet der Südslawen: Josef Matl, *Die Kultur der Südslawen.* (= *Handbuch der Kulturgeschichte.* Lieferung 101-105, Athenaion Verlag Frankfurt a. Main, 1966, 118 S.).

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