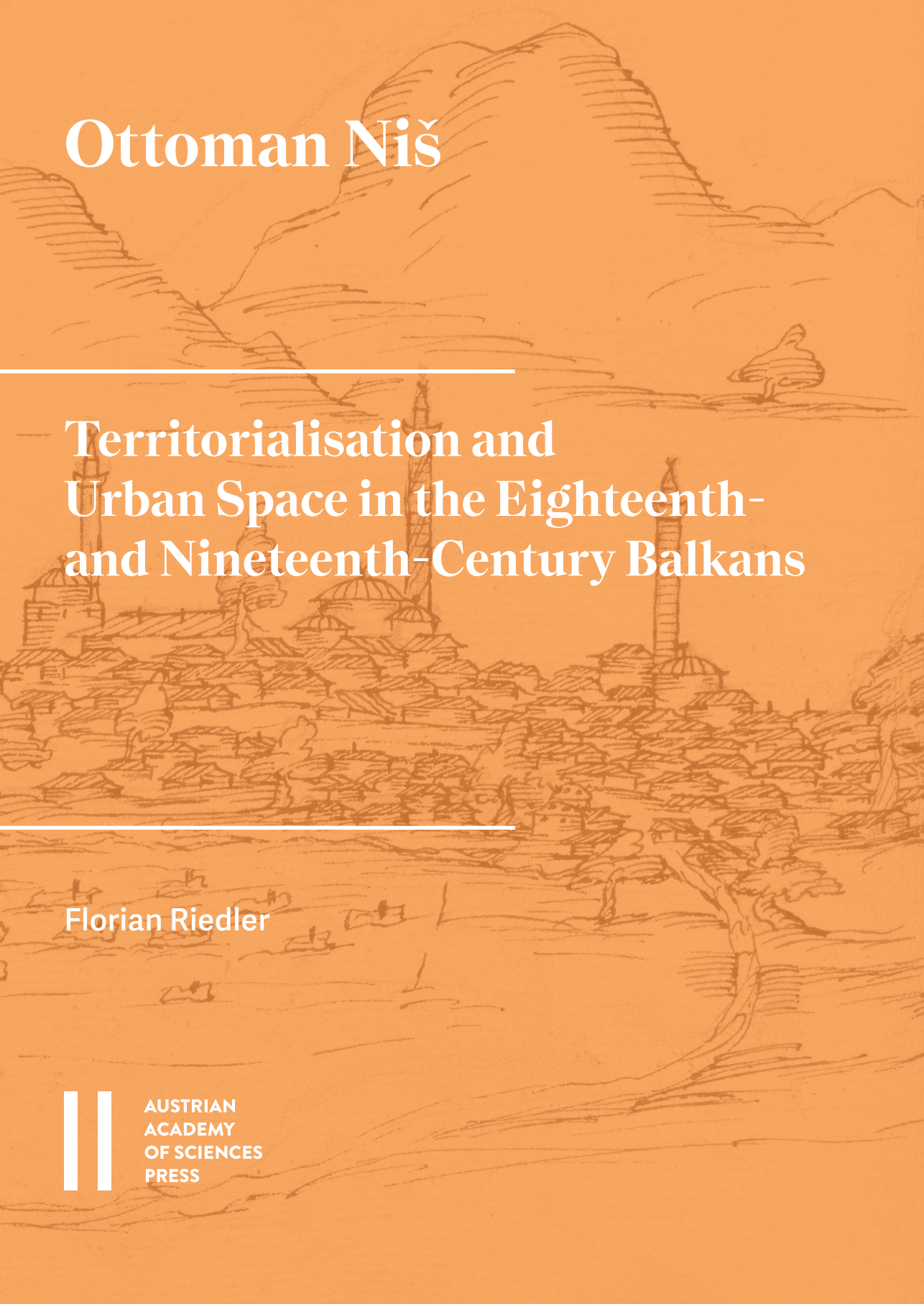




Ottoman Niš

Territorialisation and Urban Space in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Balkans

Florian Riedler



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FLORIAN RIEDLER

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Cover image: Niš in the Leiden Sketchbook, ca. 1570 by an unknown artist.
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Contents

Acknowledgements	9
1 Introduction	11
1.1 Urban Territories and Boundaries	18
1.2 State Territoriality and Borders	22
1.3 Mobility and Routes	27
2 A Small Town on the Istanbul–Belgrade Road	31
2.1 The Route and Its Travellers	33
2.2 The Town and Its Inhabitants	39
2.3 Ottoman Territoriality and Mobility	46
3 An Imperial Border City	51
3.1 Ottoman-Habsburg Border Relations	53
3.2 Fortress and City, 1690–1719–1737	59
3.3 Fortress Mentality vs. Reconstruction	75
3.4 Border Cities From a Comparative Perspective	88
4 Emerging Territories and New Borders in the Age of the Ayans	93
4.1 The Hafızpaşazade Family	95
4.2 The Serbian Uprising	109
4.3 Urban Autonomy and Growth	118
4.4 New Trade Routes	127
5 The Contours of an Urban Society	133
5.1 The First Censuses	137
5.2 Property and Urban Economy	142
5.3 Urban Territories and Their Boundaries	156
6 Redrawing Urban Boundaries in the Tanzimat Era	161
6.1 The City and the Countryside	164
6.2 Urban Governance	181
6.3 Modernisation of Infrastructure	195

7	Post-Ottoman Niš	211
7.1	A New Territorial Order	215
7.2.	De-Ottomanisation of the Cityscape	227
7.3	The Last Ottomans of Niš	236
8	Conclusion	247
	Bibliography	251
	Index	279

Acknowledgements

It was a rather sad trip. I only encountered one village and one khan along the 21 kilometre route from the old Turkish border to Niš. The black earth soddened by a thunderstorm stuck to the spokes and made progress difficult through the marshy lowland, which formed a stagnant seat of fever for Niš and its surrounding area.

Personally, I cannot agree with Felix Kanitz's depressing recollection of his first ride to the city in 1860 (*Königreich Serbien*, 1909, vol. II, p. 136). My own journey to Niš was much longer, involving many detours and dead ends, but it was also more exiting and full of new things to discover along way. It rather resembled the travels Kanitz undertook in the following three decades, zigzagging through the Balkans, which he described in numerous publications. They taught me a lot of things, above all, about roads and the details of historical mobility.

The journey began in 2011 when I joined the research network 'Phantom Borders in East Central Europe' (grant no. 01UC1104A-D), which was funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). I would like to express my gratitude for the discussions I have had with my colleagues from the various institutions involved in this network, including Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (Zentrum Moderner Orient), Hannes Grandits (HU Berlin) and Béatrice von Hirschhausen (Centre Marc Bloch). In particular, I would like to single out my friend and colleague, Nenad Stefanov, with whom I have an ongoing collaboration on topics arising from this context.

Many other people provided help and valuable insights along the way, though I can only name a few of them. In Niš, for example, Elena Vasić-Petrović, the former director of the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation, showed me around the city. I discussed parts of the material with Rossitsa Gradeva, and I shared a draft version of the manuscript with Jelena Radovanović. Konrad Petrovsky suggested publishing the book in the series of the Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. I am very grateful to the institute for its material support; without it, this publication would not have been possible.

1 Introduction



Fig. 1.1: Sculpture commemorating Constantine the Great at the Nišava bridge with the eighteenth-century Ottoman fortress in the background. Photo by Florian Riedler, 2016.

King Milan Square forms the centre of Niš, a city of 180,000 inhabitants located in the south of Serbia. The square with the statue of the king who reigned in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is lined by buildings from different historical epochs, which have defined the city's recent history: a row of late nineteenth-century houses, the Yugoslav National Bank from the 1920s now functioning as the city's town hall, and, last but not least, the modernist now-defunct Ambassador Hotel from the Socialist period. At the riverbank of the Nišava, which borders the square to the north, a sculpture was recently erected commemorating Constantine the Great, who was born in the city when it was still called Naissus (or Naissos in Greek spelling). This sculpture, displaying the portrait of the emperor from an antique coin as well as the phi-chi sign, celebrates Constantine's legendary victory in the battle at the Milvian bridge in Rome 1700 years ago. Close to the monument, a bridge connects the city centre to the northern right bank where ancient Naissus was located. Today this northern part of the city houses the central bus station, a market, and a business area as well as the historical fortress, which presently serves as a park where some of the objects from Antiquity that were found during excavations in this area are also on display.

The eighteenth-century fortress is one of the few remnants of the time when the Ottoman Empire ruled Niš (under the same name, rendered as Niş in modern Turkish) for roughly half a millennium from the beginning of the fifteenth century until 1878. The long Ottoman period is not very palpable in present-day Niš, neither in the built environment nor in the imagination of its inhabitants. Apart from the already-mentioned fortress with two ornamented Ottoman gates, an arsenal building, a powder magazine and a sixteenth-century mosque, which is currently used as an exhibition space, only very few Ottoman buildings are preserved. Perhaps most easily identified as such is the only functioning mosque of the city, located a few hundred meters west of King Milan Square.

In this situation the widely-used metaphor of the urban palimpsest to describe the layered nature of a city comes close to its original meaning. Present-day Niš is like an old parchment: reused several times by erasing older writings, i.e. scraping or washing them off to make room for new texts. Only with special technical or chemical procedures is one able to make these original texts visible again. Likewise, the Ottoman past of Niš is not apparent to the eye as in other cities where previous periods can be distinguished in the architectural style of the urban fabric, but rather mostly remains hidden in the structure or morphology of the city.

Moreover, an ideology of rupture with the Ottoman past amplifies the dearth of material remnants from the Ottoman period. As the monument to Constantine the Great shows, other periods than the Ottoman era are sources of pride and identity for the city society in present-day Serbia. Ironically, in the central part of the city south of the river the most dominant structures are two nineteenth-century

churches, which are hardly acknowledged as an Ottoman legacy, although they date from the beginning and the middle of the nineteenth century and are in many ways entwined with Ottoman history. For many modern inhabitants of Niš, the Ottoman period only serves as a negative foil for a nationalist version of history, which proclaims a total separation between the Ottoman and the Serbian times. Recently, the 140th anniversary of the city's 'liberation' was celebrated.

Under these circumstances, there is the danger of the history of Ottoman Niš remaining to a high degree antiquarian, because it has neither a material nor an ideological foothold in the present. As a narrative counter strategy, in the present study I attempt to create a link with the Ottoman past by beginning each chapter from present-day buildings, urban structures or spatial constellations to explore their Ottoman origins. By integrating the Ottoman period into the overall historical narrative of the city, I hope to provide a missing piece for the identity puzzle of its inhabitants. For many urban communities all over Europe the need to describe and define their identity with some reference to the past has become more urgent. Ultimately, the people of Niš have to judge whether or not such a puzzle piece is useful in the present situation, in which the city is still struggling with the ideological, economic and geopolitical fallout of the end of Yugoslavia.

To address the complex nature of the field of urban history, i.e. the question of what a city is and how it can adequately be described, the present study will reconstruct Ottoman Niš as a place-in-context.¹ Such an approach combines a traditional biographical approach to cities, i.e. one that stresses the special character of a particular place, with comparative methods and a thorough contextualisation of the city in question. In this way, the focus on a small place such as Niš can avoid being parochial by locating that place on a larger regional, national and transnational scale and by embedding its historical development in more general economic, political and cultural trends.

As a way of binding together these two perspectives, that of place and that of context, and focus attention on space in both, I will introduce the concept of territory. By the nature of its object, urban history has always been attentive to space. Expansion and contraction of settlements, the location of prominent buildings, the distribution of populations, administrative divisions as well as urban planning – all of these conventional topics employ a strong spatial reference to describe the

1 I am borrowing this term from Shane Ewen, *What Is Urban History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 23.

history of a city. The first section of this introduction will show in greater detail how urban space can be reconceptualised as a set of multiple territories. In so doing, I want to highlight the effect of social processes on urban space and to explore interactions with territories on a regional or transregional scale.

At the centre of the following study will be the reconstruction of the urban territories of Niš in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It will focus on the development of the city's overall layout, its quarters and prominent buildings such as mosques, churches and the fortress. Available population registers will help to map urban society, e.g. the different professional and ethno-religious groups as well as elites and marginal populations. In addition, examining municipal institutions will reveal the prevalent mechanisms of urban governance and how they shaped the city in a socio-spatial way.

Adding to this local perspective, Niš will frequently be compared to other places in order to judge the extent to which it was a typical Ottoman Balkan city. Most relevant for such a comparison are the cities in the regional context of Ottoman Europe such as Vidin and Belgrade, which were subjected to roughly the same political and economic developments. In the eighteenth century, this political context was mainly defined by the confrontation with the Habsburg Monarchy, which affected the region's cities in many ways. In the nineteenth century, regional comparisons can show how the empire-wide Ottoman reform policy that was geared specifically at the empire's cities affected different places.

In a simple manner the historiographical context in which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Niš was embedded can be described as the history of modernisation. Inspired by its spatial focus, this study will address modernisation as a process of territorialisation, i.e. the harnessing of space by the nascent modern state by militarily securing, mapping, administering and economically developing it. Inserting urban history into this discussion can help to break down the process of modern territorialisation to its effects on concrete territories on various scales. Moreover, it can highlight two key features of this process, border-making and mobility, which are rarely addressed together and in relation to cities.

Previously, territorialisation has been mainly related to the drawing of state borders, as the second section of this introduction will explain in greater detail. The present study seeks to add to that by showing the link between territorial policies and other forms of boundaries. One example is the urban society of Niš where, especially in the eighteenth century, the boundaries between the ethno-religious communities were altered by the wars that introduced new borders to the region. In the nineteenth century, the boundary between the city and the countryside was subjected to change because of economic developments. On the regional scale, the study will explore the connection between the formation of regional identities and Ottoman administrative borders.

The development of Niš suggests a second connection to a far less well-studied element of territorialisation: mobility. The third section of this introduction will further explain this theme. Controlling the circulation of goods and people was a key feature of economic development and population policies as typical elements of historical territorialisation processes. Taking into consideration the position of Niš on one of the major overland routes crossing the Balkan peninsula, I will address the question of how trade and traffic defined the city of Niš and its role in the Ottoman Balkans and how this factored into the Ottoman policies of securing their rule under the conditions of modernity.

Overall, this case study of Ottoman Niš seeks to demonstrate that Ottoman history should be examined in the mainstream framework of modern European history. Such an interpretation of Ottoman history is the story of (urban) modernity unfolding in an imperial setting before the age of nation states and nationalism. Along these lines, I follow the cues from a wide range of recent comparative scholarship of the Ottoman Empire, which tries to balance the previous generalising and sometimes top-heavy approach of Ottoman studies with a focus on a particular local setting.²

To date, Niš has played a negligible role in the scholarly literature on Ottoman cities. The main reason is that for most of its history, Niš was a small place. City monographs are usually inspired by the biographical approach to urban history, where bigger and more important places take precedence. Within Ottoman history this has been Istanbul, which as a capital and a world city absorbs a lot of urban historians' attention, thus reflecting the centralised structure of the empire.

But Niš has also been largely ignored as a comparative case in typologically oriented research. It has not been addressed as an 'Islamic city', an old, but today largely obsolete city type, which has been used by scholars to categorise cities in the Middle East and North Africa mainly in the Middle Ages, but also during the Ottoman era. For obvious reasons, Niš also cannot count as a 'port city', a city type that has inspired more recent research on the economic and cultural history of Ottoman cities in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this study I propose to examine Niš as an 'imperial city' by putting it into a comparative context with cities in the Habsburg and Russian empires. Imperial cities are defined by their functionality within an imperial context: in the case of Niš, its role of militarily securing the Ottoman-Habsburg border.³

2 For a further discussion on this point, see Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800–1912* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 12–16.

3 See chapter three and Florian Riedler, 'Guarding the Imperial Border: The Fortress City of Niš between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, 1690–1740', in *Imperial Cities in the Tsarist, the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires*, ed. by Ulrich Hofmeister and ibid. (London: Routledge,

The organisation of academic history along national lines has contributed to the less prominent status of smaller cities in the Ottoman periphery such as Niš. From the 1960s onwards, in the formative years of urban history in Turkey, Turkish scholars concentrated on exploring the Ottoman roots of modern Turkish cities in Anatolia such as Ankara, Bursa, Manisa and others. This established the foundation of a local school of urban history, in which a number of international scholars writing in English such as Halil İnalcık and Suraiya Faroqhi also participated. The chronological focus of these studies was the classical Ottoman era of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁴

In other post-Ottoman regions such a local history tradition that focused on the Ottoman era and acknowledged the contribution of the Ottoman Empire to urban life was in a much more precarious position. For a long time, the Ottoman urban legacy was rather downplayed in the nationally organised academia of the Arab Middle East and of that in the Balkans. Only since the 1980s has such a research approach become increasingly established.⁵

Regarding the post-Ottoman Balkans, this dynamic also affected research on Niš in a peculiar way. One example is the school of urban history that had already emerged in the 1960s around Nikolai Todorov, the founding director of the Institute of Balkan Studies in Sofia. Todorov and others worked on Ottoman cities in the Balkan region, but in strict isolation from other Ottoman cities. Todorov organised his work under the paradigm of the 'Balkan city', a highly ideological term that was to efface the Ottoman heritage of urban life in the Balkan region.⁶

As a synthesis of his research, Todorov published an influential volume entitled *The Balkan City, 1400–1900* (original Bulgarian 1972, English translation 1983). Apart from restating his classification of cities in Southeastern Europe as examples of the Balkan city type, the bulk of the book offers an analysis of nineteenth-

2023); on the imperial city as a type and research perspective, see Ulrich Hofmeister, 'Cities, Empires, and Eastern Europe: Imperial Cities in the Tsarist, the Habsburg, and the Ottoman Empires', in *Imperial Cities in the Tsarist, the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires*, ed. by ibid. and Florian Riedler (London: Routledge, 2023).

4 Mehmet Öz, 'Osmanlı Klasik Döneminde Anadolu Kentleri', *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, no. 6 (2005): 57–88.

5 Nelly Hanna, 'Osmanlı Dönemi Arap Şehir Tarihi Üzerine Bir İnceleme', *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, no. 6 (2005): 103–16; M. Ali Gökaçtı, Fatma Sel Turhan and Özgür Kolçak, 'Osmanlı Dönemi Balkan Şehir Tarihi: Bosna, Macaristan Ve Yunanistan Şehirleri', *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, no. 6 (2005): 117–150.

6 Alexander Vezhenkov, 'Entangled Geographies of the Balkans: The Boundaries of the Region and the Limits of the Discipline', in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans: Volume Four: Concepts, Approaches, and (Self-)Representations*, ed. Roumen Daskalov, Dina Mishkova, and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 167–168.

century urbanisation and proto-industrialisation. Following an anachronistic nationalist logic, the case studies are almost exclusively taken from Bulgarian cities.

Because of the same nationalist logic, Niš received some recognition in Yugoslavia as a subject of urbanistic research, although this research remained strictly confined to a national context. While Niš has been denied a monograph in the framework of Ottoman history because it was a small and peripheral place, this was different in Yugoslavia. With a constantly rising population, from 50.000 in 1948 to 175.000 in 1991, Niš's position among the biggest Yugoslavian cities rose from the rank of 12th to the rank of 8th; even more significantly, it was the third largest city of the Federal Socialist Republic of Serbia (after Belgrade and almost equal to Novi Sad).⁷

An authoritative *History of Niš* was prepared by the Historical Institute in Belgrade and published in three volumes between 1983 and 1986, thematically including the entire history from the first prehistorical settlement to the 1980s socialist city.⁸ The city's Ottoman phase was covered extensively in the first volume from prehistory until 'liberation from the Turks in 1878'; the excellent chapters by the Ottomanists Dušanka Bojanić on the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries and by Radmila Tričković on eighteenth-century Niš will be used extensively in the following. In comparison to other Balkan countries, in Yugoslavia the Ottoman past was more acknowledged and, in the case of Bosnian Muslim scholars, even treated with reverence.

However, also in Yugoslavia and especially in Serbia, conflicting interpretations regarding the Ottoman legacy existed side by side, which also affected the *History of Niš*. In the first volume, the nineteenth-century history of the city, which remained Ottoman until 1878, was separated from the earlier Ottoman era. The chapter covering the period between 1804 and 1878 was written by Vladimir Stojančević, an expert on Serbian nation building in the nineteenth century. Having no access to Ottoman sources, he looked at the city from a Serbian perspective of the emerging autonomous Serbian Principality, of which Niš was not a part until 1878.

It is the aim of this study to reconnect the nineteenth-century history of Niš to the preceding Ottoman history, showing that until the end of the Ottoman era, urban life was embedded in the dominant political, social and cultural trends of

7 Statistics are hard to find and at times contradictory. I take these figures from the Croatian Wikipedia, https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanovništvo_Jugoslavije, last accessed 22 May 2024.

8 Vol. 1: Danica Milić, ed. *Istorija Niša: Od Najstarijih Vremena Do Oslobođenja Od Turaka 1878. Godine* (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983); vol. 2: Ead., ed. *Istorija Niša: Od Oslobođenja 1878. Do 1941. Godine* (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1984); vol. 3: Ead., ed. *Istorija Niša: Od 1941. Do 1980. Godine* (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1986).

the empire. In general, urban history can reveal continuities that persist through ruptures that are often overemphasised in historiography. In the Balkans, such a declared rupture is generally associated with the end of the imperial order and the advent of the nation state. Although this study stops at the point in time when Niš was integrated into Serbia in 1878, I like to point to a new and innovative literature that questions the declared rupture between the two eras and instead puts the transformation from empire to nation state into the focus of their work.⁹

1.1 Urban Territories and Boundaries

The present study will approach the history of Ottoman Niš in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by focusing on multiple territories of which the city was composed and in which it was nested. Defined as bounded social spaces, territories are constructed by a group of people or an organisation, most notably the state, to serve certain functions, e.g. to enable control or give access to resources. Territories are closely connected to the identities of the groups that create them; they display the power relations of the social order under which they are produced.¹⁰ By observing urban territories, especially at their boundaries and through their connections with each other, a special perspective on the social history of a city can be gained. This study uses a model of the city as a composite of layered and overlapping territories, which are nested within larger territories such as the region or the state. Territories and the manner in which they are constructed and interpreted will be used as a structured way to present Ottoman Niš as a place in a larger context.

Generally, urban studies take the territorial nature of social life in cities for granted. Without necessarily using this terminology, urban sociology from the Chicago School of the 1920s to Henri Lefebvre's influential conceptual framework of the production of space have highlighted the relation between social processes and urban space. Territorialisation of everyday urban life, especially by particular groups in urban society, e.g. by migrants, youths or minorities, have been explored in detail by this scholarship.¹¹

9 Jelena Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy: Property in Transition to Nation-State in Post-Ottoman Niš' (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2020); Nenad Stefanov, *Die Erfindung der Grenzen auf dem Balkan: Von einer spätosmanischen Region zu nationalstaatlichen Peripherien: Pirot und Caribrod 1856–1989* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017).

10 Claude Raffestin, 'Space, Territory, and Territoriality', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30, no. 1 (February 2012): 121–41; David Delaney, *Territory: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

11 Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Simon Gunn and Robert J. Morris, eds., *Identities in Space : Contested Terrains*

Urban history has been inspired in many ways by this research on the socio-spatial nexus. Particularly, the micro-historical approach to urban life has attempted to reconstruct urban territories from the bottom up by examining the social interactions of individuals. Inspired by the methods of anthropology, micro-history uses a close reading of biographical material, which offers a new perspective on a small scale of investigation. It addresses questions of social space through the construction of urban communities and their identities.¹²

Urban historians with an interest in political institutions and governance have primarily focused on territories as administrative divisions in cities. Among their sources are not only administrative documents such as censuses, but also the study of toponyms, which are indicative of territories of the past.¹³ Also the discipline of ancient historical study with no or only very little textual evidence has aimed at uncovering past social life in cities by examining spatial structures, forms or patterns, which come to light in archaeological excavations. Here, disciplines such as historical urban topography and morphology offer the essential tools to read these remains.¹⁴

In the following history of Ottoman Niš the reconstruction of urban life by examining territories and territorialisation processes of the urban community and its various groups is guided by the available sources. Much like many other historical situations, the observation of social interaction in Ottoman Niš is always filtered through the state archive. Here, very rarely are the voices of the inhabitants of the city directly recorded, but the city and its inhabitants are rather treated as objects of governance, on an urban level, but also as a part of larger processes of territorialisation. The most consistent picture of the administrative division of Niš arises from various Ottoman censuses of the sixteenth century, the first half of the eighteenth century and of the 1830s and 1840s (chapters 2, 3 and 5). For each of these periods it must be examined in detail how these official territories were related to the social life of the inhabitants. Other official material consists in documentation of the pious foundations (*vakıf*) of the city that has already been used by the Yugoslavian historian Radmila Tričković for reconstruction the urban

in the Western City since 1850 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

- 12 Simona Cerutti, 'Processus et expérience: Individus, groupes et identités à Turin, au XVIIe siècle', in *Jeux d'échelles: La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, ed. by Jacques Revel (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 15–36.
- 13 Christian Topalov, ed., *Les divisions de la ville* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2002).
- 14 Natalie N. May and Ulrike Steinert, 'Introduction: Urban Topography as a Reflection of Society?', in *The Fabric of Cities: Aspects of Urbanism, Urban Topography and Society in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome*, ed. Natalie N. May and Ulrike Steinert (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1–41.

development of Niš in the eighteenth century (chapter 3). Unfortunately, sources that have been used in other studies to observe urban life more directly such as the records of the Islamic courts of law (*sicill*) are missing entirely in the case of Niš.¹⁵ These records were likely destroyed when the Serbian army took over the city in 1878, or they were possibly lost during a previous evacuation.

In examining urban life and its connected territories in Ottoman cities, previous studies have highlighted the importance of religious communities as constitutive elements of the urban (spatial) order. There is a long tradition of research focusing on religious communities' territorialisations, which has often started by examining the question of the degree to which Ottoman cities were segregated. The present study is in many ways inspired by this scholarship and its contribution to understanding Ottoman urban life from a micro-perspective. A recent collection put together by Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont on non-Muslims in the Islamic world explicitly uses a territorial approach in examining the connection between urban space and communal identities. In this framework of research, places of worship such as churches and synagogues play an especially important role as anchors of urban territories.¹⁶ Likewise, in my case study of Ottoman Niš, the churches of the city, which today are not usually recognised as an Ottoman legacy, as well as its mosques, most of which were destroyed in 1878, will provide important clues for the morphological analysis of urban space.

For the Muslim communities in Ottoman cities, research has focused on the traditional quarter, the *mahalle*. Because the quarters or neighbourhoods of Ottoman cities were not only everyday territorialisations of people living in the same geographical area but were also used by the state for all kinds of administrative tasks, documentation is particularly rich.¹⁷

15 See among many examples Özlem Sert-Sandfuchs, 'Reconstructing a Town from Its Court Records. Rodoscuk, 1546–1553' (Phd thesis, LMU München, 2008); Hülya Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntâb in the 17th Century*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage (Leiden: Brill, 2006); James A. Reilly, *A Small Town in Syria: Ottoman Hama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford: P. Lang, 2002).

16 'Identités confessionnelles et espace urbain en terre d'islam: Thème sous la responsabilité de Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 107–110 (2005); see particular the introduction to the collection: Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont, 'Vivre ensemble en pays d'islam: Territorialisation et marquage identitaire de l'espace urbain', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 107–110 (2005): 9–30. Also see Jean-Claude David, 'L'espace des chrétiens à Alep: Ségrégation et mixité, stratégies communautaires (1750–1850)', *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 55–56, no. 1 (1990): 150–170.

17 Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul. Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyas Mahalle* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003).

This study builds on a long-term research project that the author has conducted together with Nora Lafi and approaches territories through their boundaries.¹⁸ Our research stresses the layered and overlapping character of urban territories as well as the fact that their boundaries should be conceived not so much as separation lines, but as means of exchange and connection. In this way, we hoped to avoid essentialising urban territories and the identities of the groups that created them. Thus, the simple question of segregation vs. mixing of religious communities became more complex and directed our attention to the interplay of all kinds of urban groups at the boundaries of different territories. While the institutionalisation of quarters by the official religious communities, the Muslims, Christians and Jews, was certainly important, scholars have also started to explore many other territories constructed by political factions, property owners, or marginal groups, which overlapped in space and time with other territories.¹⁹

Finally, the question of *the* urban community, its social identity as expressed in urban space, should not be left out of the picture.²⁰ In scholarship on Ottoman cities such a communal identity has been mainly connected to the *ayans* or urban notables who became leaders of collective action and urban institutions of their cities vis-à-vis the imperial government in Istanbul. Following this approach, one chapter of this study will reconstruct the life of the main *ayan* family of Niš, the Hafızpaşazades (chapter 4). Their *konak*, which was located in the heart of the city close to King Milan Square, but is no longer extant, can be regarded as the expression of a new city-identity that emerged in the late eighteenth century. Notable families played an important role in the formation of this identity, which arose from competition with other cities and the central government.

In addition to Ottoman documentation, this study also relies on external sources to capture the urban structure and its evolution. Apart from the accounts of European travellers, which are used throughout, there are several maps that the Habsburg military produced when it conquered Niš in 1689 and 1737 (chapter 3); for the very end of the Ottoman period, a map the Serbian military drew in 1878 gives valuable information about the urban layout at the end of the Ottoman

18 Nora Lafi and Florian Riedler, 'Administrative Boundaries, Communal Segregation and Factional Territorialisation: The Complex Nature of Urban Boundaries in the Ottoman Empire', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, no. 4 (2018): 593–605.

19 Yuval Ben-Bassat and Johann Büsow, 'Urban Factionalism in Late Ottoman Gaza, c. 1875–1914: Local Politics and Spatial Divisions', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, no. 4 (2018): 606–49; Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis, 'Comment définir le quartier dans une ville ottomane plurielle: Smyrne aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles', *Anatolia Moderna* 10 (2004): 139–48.

20 Nora Lafi, *Esprit civique et organisation citadine dans l'Empire ottoman (XVe-XXe Siècles)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018).

period (chapter 7). Because of their military purpose, these city maps do not show social territories as such, but they underline the central position of cartography as a medium of state territoriality, which in this particular historical situation also was directed at urban space.²¹ As will be explained in the in the next section in greater detail, it is necessary to examine territorialisations on the urban and the state level together. The formation of urban territories, most notably those directly created by the state, often ran in parallel to the formation of state territory and was implemented by the same techniques of governance such as mapping, drawing borders, controlling traffic or homogenising laws.

1.2 State Territoriality and Borders

In urban studies, the term *territory* has not been very prominent in descriptions of social space or place. The original meaning of *territorium*, the land around a city, already indicates that the term is usually used for larger spaces of a different nature. Most prominently, political geography and international relations theory have focused on territory as the space of sovereign states. The present study will broaden its focus on urban territories by integrating larger territories in order to describe the context in which Ottoman Niš was developing. This concerns the relations between the city and its *territorium*, i.e. the surrounding countryside, which was part of the district (*kaza*) of Niš, but more importantly, involves processes of territorialisation on the regional and state levels, which were conducted through waging war and drawing borders.

Most fundamentally, a process of re-territorialisation on an imperial scale provides the chronological framework of this study. Its starting point is marked by the conquest of Niš by the Habsburg army in 1689, when the city was not only largely destroyed, but also found itself in a totally altered geopolitical position after the Ottomans reconquered it in the following year. Before the war, the city had been securely located in the heart of Ottoman Europe as a station on the route from Istanbul to Belgrade. After the war, Niš became part of a newly emerging region bordering the Habsburg Monarchy. The major territorial changes in 1878, when the city was incorporated into Serbia, mark the end of the study. Interestingly, Niš remained a border city after 1878, albeit in the intermediary borderland between Serbia and Bulgaria. Although this period of geopolitical reorientation would be

21 Michael Biggs, 'Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 02 (1999).

a pertinent topic in the question of continuity and rupture in an urban context, too, it will be largely excluded from this study.²²

In between these geopolitical turning points of 1689 and 1878, the study asks how the Ottoman regime of territoriality affected the development of the city. It will address different policies that were the result of an evolving understanding of territoriality and, at the same time, instrumental in transforming Ottoman state territory in very concrete ways. At different times and with different levels of intensity, this included the military fortification of the border and the reorganisation of provincial administration, as well as the economic and infrastructural development of the region. By tracing the historical evolution of Ottoman territoriality, this approach seeks to avoid the 'territorial trap' of international relations theory of conceptualising state territories as airtight, mutually exclusive spaces constructed by state-defined societies.²³

For the general European context, such an evolution of territoriality has been sketched out by Charles Maier in a book-length treatment.²⁴ Overall, Maier offers an account of territorial thinking and practices of the modern state from about the middle of the seventeenth century, which he contrasts to previous imperial forms of territoriality. In this classification, empires are characterised as huge but not very deeply penetrated assemblages of smaller and sometimes overlapping territories, surrounded by moving frontier zones. In contrast, modern states seek to establish an undivided sovereignty inside their homogenous territories and recognise the sovereignty of other states outside their well-defined borders. In the historical proliferation of modern territorial states, first steps were the mapping and fortification of borders, before the property rights and economic productivity of these emerging state territories were re-ordered.

In Maier's historical model, the Ottoman Empire serves as a prime example for imperial territoriality. Specialists in Ottoman history have also stressed features that Maier uses to distinguish the territory of empires and modern states. One of these features is the frontier as an open space of expansion that characterised the Ottoman Empire from its beginnings to the seventeenth century. In

22 Many effects of the new border have been examined in Nenad Stefanov, *Die Erfindung der Grenzen auf dem Balkan: Von einer spätosmanischen Region zu nationalstaatlichen Peripherien: Pirot und Caribrod 1856–1989* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017) and id. 'Tsaribrod, a Dot on the Line: A Microhistorical Approach to Societal Change along the Route in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *The Balkan Route: Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput*, ed. Florian Riedler and Nenad Stefanov (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 139–182.

23 John Agnew, 'The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory', *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 53–80.

24 Charles S. Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

concept and practice, such a frontier, which the Ottomans shared with many of their Eurasian neighbours, was not only a zone of endemic warfare, but also functioned as an interface of contact through trading and raiding. In frontier zones or 'borderlands', as they have been called in other terminology, the imperial centre followed mixed policies of co-optation and repression in response to local populations' strategies of collaboration and rebellion. Borderlands, which often were politically tied to the empire as vassals or tributary states, existed in many peripheries of the Ottoman Empire: from Hungary to Crimea, Georgia, East Anatolia, Yemen, and the Maghreb.²⁵

Niš was directly located in the frontier zone of Ottoman expansion of the last quarter of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century. As a result, it changed hands several times. It was conquered by the Ottomans in 1386 and in 1428, and then in 1443 by the Hungarians. In between, it was controlled by Serbian rulers who sometimes accepted Ottoman suzerainty. Around 1456, Niš finally fell to the Ottomans when Sultan Mehmed II incorporated a Serbian principality into Ottoman territory, but could not take Belgrade, which remained a Hungarian border fortress.²⁶

Another important feature of Ottoman territory that marked it as an imperial space was the diversity or heterogeneity of the subjected societies and their institutions. According to Karen Barkey and others, the management of diversity also in its territorial aspect was the key factor of Ottoman success and the longevity of the empire. Because, in contrast to modern states, the imperial understanding of governance, sovereignty and territoriality was flexible, it could adapt to successive challenges.²⁷

25 Colin Heywood, 'The Frontier in Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths', in *Frontiers in Question*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 231; Gábor Ágoston, 'A Flexible Empire: Authority and Its Limits on the Ottoman Frontiers', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (2003): 15–29; A.C.S. Peacock, ed., *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, 'Between Universalistic Claims and Reality: Ottoman Frontiers in the Early Modern Period', in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2012), 205–219; Sabri Ateş, *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); for an excellent overview over the literature, see Matthew H. Ellis, 'Over the Borderline? Rethinking Territoriality at the Margins of Empire and Nation in the Modern Middle East (Part I)', *History Compass* 13, no. 8 (August 2015): 411–422 and *ibid.* (Part II): 423–34. For a comparative approach, see Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

26 A. Cevat Eren, 'Niş', *İslam Ansiklopedisi* 9 (1964–1969): 294–295.

27 Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) Burak Kadercan, 'Territorial Design and Grand Strategy in the Ottoman Empire', *Territory, Politics, Governance* 5, no. 2 (3 April 2017): 158–176.

An historical model of territoriality such as Maier's, which employs a binary classification of empires vs. (nation) states, is helpful in providing some orientation, but at the same time, it tends to obfuscate historical contingencies and special cases. Particularly, the timing of when a modern concept of territoriality became predominant remains debated. Imperial territorial forms were common until well into the nineteenth century as has been shown with respect to the European overseas empires with their various legal regimes, territorial enclaves, corridors etc.²⁸ A similar but inverted case can be made regarding the Ottoman Empire. While European states continued imperial practices of territoriality in their overseas empires, the Ottomans, like other empires, adapted to some 'modern' territorial forms in some regional settings. Most pointedly, this has been formulated in an article by Rifaat Abou-el-Haj on the 'closure of the Ottoman frontier'.²⁹ The title refers to the 1699 treaty of Karlowitz, which redrew the border between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy at the Middle Danube and transformed it into a demarcated line border. Chapter 3 will examine how this transformation from imperial frontier to state border was cemented by building fortresses as an expression of a new understanding of state territory.

However, also in the nineteenth century, the co-existence of 'imperial' and 'modern' elements of territoriality continued, as can be observed around the creation of new borders. While the Ottoman bureaucracy increasingly sought to adopt such territorial practices as would allow it to penetrate Ottoman society more deeply in the manner of the model of the territorial state (particularly on an urban level, as this study will demonstrate), it faced opposition by local elites against this form of centralisation. When successful, such local elites could form their own political territories within the imperial framework without necessarily adhering to the types of ethno-nationalist understanding of territoriality that implied secession and full-fledged sovereignty. Some such territories, e.g. Egypt or Greece, quickly transformed into independent states; others, such as Serbia or Lebanon, retained an autonomous status for quite a while. On the one hand, these differentiations in status and degree of sovereignty were instruments of the European powers who wanted to manage the military weakness of the Ottoman

28 Krishan Kumar, 'Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?', *Theory and Society* 39, no. 2 (March 2010): 119–43; Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Siniša Malešević, 'Empires and Nation-States: Beyond the Dichotomy', *Thesis Eleven* 139, no. 1 (1 April 2017): 3–10.

29 Rifaat A. Abou-el-Haj, 'The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe: 1699–1703', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89, no. 3 (1969): 467–475. Also see id., 'Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 87, no. 4 (1967): 498–512.

Empire and its consequences for the European balance of power.³⁰ On the other hand, granting autonomy was a time-honoured imperial instrument that was now updated by the Ottoman government to fit the evolving territorial state paradigm, which began to inform the relations between the Ottomans and the European states.³¹

In urban studies, the effect of state territorial practices can be seen with particular clarity in border cities. Here, it is immediately visible how different border regimes mould the economies, the populations or political ideas of cities located near the border.³² Divided cities are a special case wherein attempts at territorial homogenisation affect cities violently and turn them into contested borders themselves. It is not by chance that many currently divided cities, e.g., Nicosia, Jerusalem and Sarajevo, formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire; these examples attest to the legacy of imperial territoriality that lies beneath the current ideal of a homogenous state territory.³³

In the Ottoman context, one of the most interesting examples for the effects of different practices and ideas of territoriality on a border city is Belgrade. In the fifteenth century Belgrade became the principal Hungarian border fortress against the Ottomans, before the latter captured it in 1521 and used it as a springboard for their conquest of Hungary. Beginning in the eighteenth century, it served again as the main border city on the Habsburg-Ottoman border on the Danube.³⁴ The phase after 1817, when the city was under a dual Ottoman-Serbian administration, is examined in an article by Attila Aytekin. In line with the criticism quoted above, he demonstrates that territorial practices should not be dichotomised into

30 Peter Haldén, 'A Non-Sovereign Modernity: Attempts to Engineer Stability in the Balkans 1820–90', *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 337–359.

31 Clemens Hoffmann, 'The Balkanization of Ottoman Rule: Premodern Origins of the Modern International System in Southeastern Europe', *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 4 (2008): 373–396; Elektra Kostopoulou, 'Armed Negotiations: The Institutionalization of the Late Ottoman Locality', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 3 (2013): 295–309.

32 Paul Nugent, 'Border Towns and Cities in Comparative Perspective', in *A Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2012), 557–572.

33 Liam O'Dowd, 'Contested States, Frontiers and Cities', in *A Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2012), 158–176; Nora Lafi and Florian Riedler, 'Post-osmanische Phantome im städtischen Raum Südosteuropas, Anatoliens, des Mittleren Ostens und Nordafrikas', in *Wahrnehmen, Erfahren, Gestalten: Phantomgrenzen und soziale Raumproduktion*, ed. Beatrice von Hirschhausen and Michael G. Esch (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017), 187–213.

34 Selim Aslantaş, 'Belgrad-ı Dârü'l-Cihâd', *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15 (2011): 13–37.

imperial Ottoman and modern Serbian. Instead, territorialisations on a state as well as on a city level follow their own logics with distinct types often mingling.³⁵

Niš was placed in an intermediate position within the same militarily organised border region as Belgrade, the *serhad* (frontier), which mirrored the *Militärgrenze* (military border) on the Habsburg side. Only from 1718 to 1739 was Niš a border city in the strict sense of the word, when the Habsburg-Ottoman border ran ca. 80 kilometres to the north of the city. This period will be examined in detail because it gave a strong impulse toward the urban development and growth of Niš; most importantly, it was the time when the fortress was given its final shape by the Ottomans (chapter 3). A comparison with other cities of the region such as Belgrade and Vidin will show the general effect of bordering practices on urban development on an architectural, social, and also a psychological level.

Moving into the nineteenth century, the study's focus will shift to the influence of the new internal border with the autonomous Principality of Serbia, which developed out of the Pashalik of Belgrade where Christian rebels had seized power in two revolts at the beginning of the nineteenth century (chapter 4). As has been noted in the case of Belgrade, it is important to avoid a teleological reading of this territorialisation process as is put forward by a national Serbian historiography. Were we to accept such a reading, the subject of this study, Ottoman Niš, would become meaningless and the history of the city would only really start with its 'liberation' in 1878.

1.3 Mobility and Routes

The present study highlights the social processes constitutive of territorialisations on an urban level, the groups involved in their creation as well as the ways in which local territorialisations conflicted with state territoriality. In such an approach, boundaries take a special place, because it is in these urban border settings that territoriality is expressed most clearly. Studies of boundaries will be complemented by attention to mobility as another less well-researched agent defining the processes of territorialisation and shifting the focus away from the inside of territories. In the recent theoretical discussions around the issue of globalisation, mobility studies have proposed using phenomena of circulation, travel, movement and the like in this way to break up the place-centeredness of social sciences. However, it has also become clear that it is not useful to totally decouple social processes from

35 E. Attila Aytekin, 'The Production of Space during the Period of Autonomy: Notes on Belgrade Urban Space, 1817–67', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 6 (2016): 588–607.

space; research from the perspective of mobility must reckon with borders where mobility stops, re-territorialisations that reflect different regimes of and access to mobility and the emergence of solid moorings as well as infrastructures that facilitate circulation of people and goods but are themselves immobile.³⁶

From an urban studies perspective, mobility connects to the territorial approach in several ways. In a very general sense, a city as an abstraction of overlapping social territories can only come into being, if there is interaction between these territories. In practical terms, urban territories are not self-sufficient and sealed-off entities, although their boundaries are always marked physically or symbolically. The regulation of mobility on an urban level has been addressed as an important element of historical urban governance and policing. According to Foucault, European Absolutism enlarged the urban model to the size of the whole state to 'urbanise the territory' in the sense of organising mobility, exchange and communication in a similar way.³⁷

On the level of geography, cities are connected to their hinterlands and especially to other cities. Urban historians have frequently commented on the location of cities 'at the crossroads', i.e. at intersection of important overland routes, which defined their economic function.³⁸ Especially for historians interested in pre-industrial urban networks and hierarchies, mobility of goods and people and the enabling transport infrastructures are important factors of urbanisation.³⁹

On the level of state territories, it is not only important to look at boundaries to avoid essentialising territories, but also to include movement across boundaries into the analysis. Mobility causes the definitions and re-definitions of space by introducing new socio-spatial processes and reallocation of territorial boundaries. For scholars who have examined the emergence of the modern state, mobility itself becomes a necessary precondition to define the inside and outside of a territory

36 Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 38, no. 2 (February 2006): 207–226; also see Florian Riedler and Nenad Stefanov, 'Bordering and Mobility as an Approach to the History of the Balkan Route', in *The Balkan Route: Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput*, ed. id. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 1–19.

37 Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: Cours au Collège de France, 1977–1978* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 3–29 (lecture on 11 January 1978) and 341–347 (lecture on 5 April 1978); Stuart Elden, 'Governmentality, Calculation, Territory', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 3 (June 2007): 564–565.

38 Robert S. Lopez, 'The Crossroads within the Wall', in *The Historian and the City*, ed. Oscar Handlin and John Burchard (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1963), 27.

39 Bernard Lepetit, *The Pre-industrial Urban System: France 1740–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

in the process of forming. While this is often acknowledged for economic flows, some argue that it also holds for the political constitution of a state territory.⁴⁰

In the present study, mobility in various forms and on various scales will play a role in a number of ways, but is most visible regarding trade and traffic on the route from Istanbul to Belgrade on which Niš was located. While over the centuries borders were vanishing and re-emerging in the region, this route had a continuing influence on the history and development of the city. Naissus grew from a small settlement to a Roman military base and a city in the second century CE at the moment the Romans built the road crossing their Balkan territory from Byzantium to the middle Danube at Singidunum (today Belgrade) and Viminacium, a military base-cum-city on the Danube that was located to the east of present-day Smederevo.⁴¹ The road, which today is usually known by the name *Via Militaris*, together with the bridge over the river Nišava continued to play a role in the Middle Ages for the Byzantines, the regional states developing in the Balkans as well as the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period.⁴²

The Istanbul–Belgrade road acted as infrastructure to project military power and keep the connection between the cities as nodes of state power. Moreover, taxable trade on this road meant an additional income for rulers who otherwise mainly had to rely on revenue from agriculture. Because of this dependency on routes and circulation, the Medieval Balkan states as well as the Ottoman Empire have been called dromocracies (derived from the Greek *dromos* for ‘way’ or ‘corridor’). The Ottomans took over many of the principal routes in Anatolia and the Balkans from the Romans. Ottoman officers, soldiers, merchants, money and other goods were circulating on them from and to the capital Istanbul.⁴³

As an introduction to the history of Niš in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the next chapter will examine the consequences of this particular Ottoman regime of mobility, which was closely tied to centralism as an imperial expression of territoriality (chapter 2). The urban infrastructure of mobility as well as the overall spatial imagination of Niš as a city on the route will be briefly sketched to contrast it with the later development when Niš became a border city. The second

40 Philip E. Steinberg, ‘Sovereignty, Territory, and the Mapping of Mobility: A View from the Outside’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 3 (8 July 2009): 467–495.

41 Jan Burian and Eckhard Wirbelauer, ‘Naissus’, in *Brill’s New Pauly*, Consulted online on 21 February 2019. First published online: 2006; Lohmann, Hans, Josef Wiesehöfer, and Michael Rathmann. ‘Roads’. In *Brill’s New Pauly*. Online edition. Ed. by Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider. First published online 2006. Consulted online on 21 February 2019.

42 Florian Riedler, Nenad Stefanov, eds. *The Balkan Route: Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

43 Traian Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds: The First and Last Europe* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1994), 99.

half of the eighteenth century also saw changes in mobility connected to the new borders, especially the surge in trade with the Habsburg Monarchy and the reconfiguration of regional migration (chapter 4).

In the nineteenth century it was the technological and infrastructural modernisation of the route that had a decisive impact on urban development and territorial practices and imaginations. In a European context, this has mostly been studied regarding the railway, which bound national territories together politically and economically, but was, in the form of railway imperialism, also directed outward.⁴⁴ The railway arrived in Niš only in 1888, i.e. in the post-Ottoman period, but since the 1840s, the Ottoman government had already been discussing how to modernise the transport infrastructure in Ottoman Europe, which resulted in the upgrading of the road network and the construction of the first railway lines.⁴⁵ For Niš, this had the biggest impact in the context of the reorganisation of provincial administration in the 1860s, in which the city became part of the new model Danube Province (chapter 6). The administrative re-ordering of territory and the modernisation of transport infrastructure had a direct impact on Ottoman territoriality in this final phase of Ottoman Niš.

⁴⁴ Maier, *Once Within Borders*, 185–228.

⁴⁵ Florian Riedler, 'Building Modern Infrastructures on Ancient Routes: Road and Rail Development in Nineteenth-Century Edirne', in *The Heritage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times: Continuities, Disruptions and Reconnections.*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Florian Riedler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

2 A Small Town on the Istanbul–Belgrade Road



Fig. 2.1: Niš coach station. Photo by Florian Riedler, 2016.

For people without a private car, today's preferred means of intercity public transport in Serbia is the coach. Arriving from Belgrade, the traveller disembarks at Niš coach station behind the western bastion of the fortress. From there, it is only a ten-minute walk to the city centre at King Milan Square along the high street of Beogradmala (Belgrade Quarter). The street, which runs parallel to the fortress wall towards the bridge, is lined with shops and market stalls. Some of these stalls even block the Belgrad Gate, so that the fortress remains accessible only from the Istanbul Gate located right at the bridge. With the exception of the blocked gate, today's coach travellers from Belgrade enter the city on the same route as did early modern travellers. By virtue of its location at the northern edge of the fortress, the coach station has re-established the traditional route into the city that had been interrupted by the railway. Since the railway was built in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the trains from Belgrade crossed the river on a separate railway bridge to stop at the main station located at the western edge of the left bank city.

Between Belgrade and Niš, coaches use the E 75 motorway, which continues as the E 80 to the Bulgarian capital of Sofia and further on to Istanbul. This motorway is part of the old overland route across Southeast Europe, which might have existed even before the Romans built the first paved road on it in the first century CE. Usually known today as the *Via Militaris*, this Roman road has remained the central line of communication of the region, having been continuously modernised over the centuries. It played a major role for the Byzantines in the tenth and eleventh centuries, as well as for the Ottomans in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in their domination of the Balkans. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the road was updated with a railway line. However, in contrast to the time when the famous Orient Express was in service between Paris and Istanbul, today there is only very restricted rail traffic. Most travellers and goods are transported on the motorway, which was modernised recently in the framework of an EU infrastructure program. East of Niš the road was returned to the trace it had followed since Antiquity, before it had been re-routed in the late nineteenth century. During construction work in this as well as in other sites in Bulgaria and Serbia, many archaeological artefacts from the Roman, Byzantine and Medieval period were unearthed, which attest to the long continuity of the route.⁴⁶

46 For the history of the route, see Florian Riedler, Nenad Stefanov, eds. *The Balkan Route: Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

For the history of Niš, this trans-Balkan route forms an important element of continuity, determining the geopolitical position and the economy of the place. The route and the settlement, both characterised by their layered and long-term existence, depended upon each other. The route has an imprint on urban structures and territories to this day, as can be seen in the market quarter at the bus station. This chapter will use the route as a means of introducing Ottoman Niš in the time before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It will mainly focus on a series of travel accounts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to give an impression of how mobility was essential in defining the city as well as Ottoman territoriality overall.

Travellers from Central Europe, most importantly Habsburg diplomats and ambassadors from Vienna on their way to the Ottoman capital, entered the city from the north. As foreigners, they were particularly attentive to details that contrasted to their home regions. Conversely, Ottoman travellers, in particular Ottoman officials from the centre, were still on their home territory when they entered Niš. Their accounts can offer insight into their own mental maps on which they located the town. Finally, for a less impressionistic and more quantitative portrait of Niš and its inhabitants, this chapter will summarise the results of a series of Ottoman censuses from the sixteenth century.

2.1 The Route and Its Travellers

Especially in the accounts of those travellers coming from Central Europe, the experience of travelling was a central topic, including the road itself, the means of transportation and the surrounding service infrastructure. For the diplomats among them, the crossing of the border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire was also an event worth mentioning. All of these elements are present in the famous account by Ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592) about his mid-sixteenth-century mission to Istanbul and Amasya. Busbecq was a Flemish diplomat and humanist who was sent by Ferdinand I (r. 1531–1558, as emperor 1558–1564) to the court of Sultan Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566) to negotiate an armistice between the two states. In November 1554, the ambassador crossed the border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, which was located in Upper Hungary between the fortresses of Komárno (Hung. Komárom, Germ. Komorn) and Esztergom (Ott. Estergon, Germ. Gran). At that time, there was little protocol. When observing a group of Ottoman riders approaching across the plain, Busbecq send away his hussars and his carriages were received by the Ottoman side to be escorted to Esztergom. Only later in the century, when the embassies grew larger and especially when there was an exchange of an Ottoman with a Habsburg ambassador, the act of crossing the

border was surrounded with elaborate ceremonies.⁴⁷ The next chapter will focus on one of these exchanges in greater detail.

After crossing the border, the Habsburg mission went to Buda (Ott. Budin), the seat of the Ottoman pasha, from whence it proceeded with luggage and coaches by boat down the Danube; at Belgrade, Busbecq continued on the land route to Istanbul, which he reached at the end of January. This itinerary also directed him to Niš:

Not far from Jagodina we encountered a small river which the inhabitants call the Nishava [possibly Busbecq means the Morava, FR], and we kept it on our immediate right until we reached Nish. A little farther on we saw on its banks, where there remained traces of a Roman road, a small marble column still standing with an inscription in Latin, but so mutilated as to be illegible. Nish is a little town of some consideration, and well populated for that part of the world.

It is time that I should tell you something of the inns we frequented; you have probably been long expecting an account of them. At Nish I was lodged in the public inn, or caravanserai, as it is called in Turkish. It is the most usual form of lodging in these parts, and consists of a vast building, rather long for its breadth. In the middle is an open space for the baggage, camels, mules, and vehicles.⁴⁸

In Busbecq's short passage on Niš two pieces of travel infrastructure play central roles – clearly, more central than the city itself. First, the road that was not only necessary for reaching the destination at all, but by way of mentioning the Roman remains, also offered the opportunity to situate the region on the European readers' mental map. Not only Busbecq, but many travellers up to the nineteenth century, e.g. Felix Kanitz (1829–1904), an Austrian geographer who 'discovered' the Balkans for a European public, highlighted the origin of the route they travelled as a Roman road, copied inscriptions along the way and collected Roman coins.⁴⁹

47 Karl Teply, 'Türkische Gesandtschaften nach Wien (1488–1792)', in: *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 20 (1976), 14–33.

48 Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, ed. E.S. Forster and K.A. Roider (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 16–17.

49 Mihailo Popović, *Von Budapest nach Istanbul: Die Via Traiana im Spiegel der Reiseliteratur des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Eudora, 2006).

The second important item of travel infrastructure was the khan or caravanserai.⁵⁰ Such an accommodation for travellers in Niš was also mentioned by others, e.g. by Hans Dernschwam (1494–1569), a merchant and adventurer who passed Niš one year ahead of Busbecq and later travelled with him in Anatolia. Once again, the caravanserai was not only a building, but many travel accounts used its description as a narrative device for signalling to their readers that they had entered a foreign world with strange customs.⁵¹ While Busbecq introduced this topos when describing Niš, others such as Salomon Schweigger (1551–1622), the preacher of a Habsburg ambassador, in his account of his voyage to Istanbul in 1577 also described his stay in a caravanserai near Batočina in present-day Central Serbia. Arriving in Niš, he only remarks that the town was insignificant with nothing special to see.⁵²

Reinhold Lubenau (1556–1631), who passed Niš in March 1587 as the pharmacist of the Habsburg mission, as well as Melchior Besolt three years earlier, mention another type of accommodation. They stayed at one of the dervish lodges in the city. The public soup kitchens (*imaret*) of some of these lodges, which were built in many Balkan cities in the course of the Ottoman conquest, offered free accommodation to travellers.⁵³ We know the names of three such lodges from Evliya Çelebi, the most famous Ottoman traveller, who passed through Niš in spring 1660 on his way from Edirne to Transylvania. However, in his account they are not so much part of the travel infrastructure but spiritual centres of the city. Unlike the European travellers from the north, he does not mention any of the khans and caravanserais. For him these were just normal features of any Ottoman city that deserved no special mention unless they were truly big and impressive.

50 For the attempt of a definition, see Robin Wimmel, 'Edirne as a Stopover Destination: The Ekmekçiöğlu Caravanserai and the Ottoman Road Network', in *The Heritage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Florian Riedler (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 157–161.

51 Işık Tamdoğan-Abel, 'Les han, ou l'étranger dans la ville ottomane', in *Vivre dans l'Empire ottoman: Sociabilités et relations intercommunautaires (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, ed. François Georgeon, Paul Dumont and Méropi Anastassidou-Dumont (Paris: Harmattan, 1997), 319–334.

52 Salomon Schweigger, *Ein neue Reyßbeschreibung auß Teutschland nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem* (Nürnberg: Johann Lantzenberger, 1608), 41.

53 Lubenau as quoted in T. Popović, 'Niš u delima putpisatka XVI–XVII veka', in *Istorija Niša*, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Grandina i Prosveta, 1983), 1:187–188; Melchior Besolt, *Herrn Heinrichs Herrn von Liechtenstein ... Röm. Key. Maiest. Abgesandten Reyß auff Constantinopel im 1584. Jar*, in *Johannes Leunclavius, Neuwe Chronica Türckischer nation* (Frankfurt: Marne et al., 1590), 526.

While the embassies from Vienna came to Niš via Belgrade from the north, a few travellers from Europe also approached the town from the west.⁵⁴ Those disembarking in the Adriatic port of Dubrovnik, also called Ragusa in Italian, could follow a commercial route that the merchants of this port had established. The Republic of Dubrovnik was in a tributary relationship with the Ottoman Empire beginning in the mid-fifteenth century; its merchants held special privileges and dominated Balkan trade during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Ragusan merchant caravans used different routes to trade with their commercial colonies in Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia. Many of these routes branched out from Novi Pazar (Ott. Yenipazar), which was linked to Ragusa by a road via Foča in Herzegovina. From Novi Pazar, there was also a junction with the Istanbul–Belgrade road at Niš. Every year two Ragusan envoys travelled down this road to deliver the tribute of the city to the sultan in Istanbul.⁵⁵

As an entrepot, Niš was of lesser importance to the Ragusan merchants. The town is not listed among the six official colonies of Belgrade, Sofia, Sarajevo, Novi Pazar, Prokuplje and Provadia, all of which had a considerable number of resident merchants from Dubrovnik. Only a small number of Ragusan merchants lived permanently in Niš, with the exception of a period in the last quarter of the sixteenth century when the city enjoyed a commercial boom and their number rose to about 20. Overall, Prokuplje, located just 30 kilometres to the west of Niš, remained the more important colony in the region.⁵⁶

The Ottomans were aware of how important the road network was for trade, administration, and military purposes. Thus the state invested in the transport infrastructure in general and made specific arrangements for their officers from the civil administration and the military. Most basically, the Ottoman government maintained the road surface and, in many places, had it paved with cobblestone. This was particularly the case in places where the use of carts and waggons was possible as e.g. on large parts of the Istanbul–Belgrade route.⁵⁷

54 Elisabetta Borromeo, *Voyageurs occidentaux dans l'Empire ottoman (1600–1644)* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2007), 1:223–228.

55 Zdenko Zlatar, *Dubrovnik's Merchants and Capital in the Ottoman Empire (1520–1620): A Quantitative Study* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011), 173–184.

56 T. Popović, 'Dubrovačka Kolonija u Nišu', in *Istorija Niša*, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 1:172.

57 Tatjana Katić, 'Transforming the Landscape of the Constantinople Road in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries (Section Niš–Dragoman)', in *The Balkan Route: Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput*, ed. Florian Riedler and Nenad Stefanov (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 85–87.

Even more vital for transportation than pavement were bridges over larger or smaller rivers. It can be argued that the city of Niš itself owed its continuous existence to the bridge over the Nišava, which had existed in this position since Antiquity. When the city became Ottoman, the former Roman stone bridge had already vanished, and a wooden bridge had been constructed in its place. Over the sixteenth century, the Ottomans maintained and repaired it several times. In 1619 one Mehmed Pasha, possibly the later Grand Vizier Gürcü Mehmed Pasha, erected a new bridge on five stone pillars in that location. Until the late nineteenth century, these pillars were used to support a wooden construction with a kiosk in the middle of the bridge.⁵⁸

Another Ottoman investment was the network of caravanserais that was built mostly in the sixteenth century on the greater and lesser routes of the expanding empire. Usually, it was not the sultan himself, but the grand viziers and local high officials who built such structures and endowed them with the necessary revenues for their upkeep. On the Istanbul–Belgrade road, big caravanserais were constructed close to the capital on the way to Edirne, in Edirne itself, but also in smaller places such as Harmanli (Harmanlı), two stages east of Edirne in today's Bulgaria.⁵⁹ In a similar manner, local Ottoman officials outfitted the difficult route from Ragusa over the mountains of Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Sandžak, the region around Novi Pazar, with bridges and caravanserais. There was no imperial master plan for this type of infrastructure development, but rather a flexible competition of patronage that acted on several scales.⁶⁰

We have already quoted Busbecq and Dernschwam, who witnessed the building of a new caravanserai in Niš during this critical phase of infrastructure development. Unfortunately, we have no information on the donor of this or other such buildings that must have existed in the city. The stone caravanserai seems to have been demolished during the eighteenth century; lesser structures also did not survive into the twentieth century.

In addition to the road surface and caravanserais, the security of travelling was an important issue during the whole of the Ottoman period. To prevent banditry and also to repair the road, the Ottoman government appointed highway watchmen who, rather than a salary, received tax privileges. They were called *derbentçis* because they were usually placed at mountain passes (*derbent*). Often entire villages

58 Dušanka Bojanić, 'Niš Do Velikog Rata 1683', in *Istorija Niša*, vol. 1, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 117.

59 Wimmel, 'Edirne as a Stopover Destination'.

60 Jesse C. Howell, 'The Ragusa Road: Mobility and Encounter in the Ottoman Balkans (1430–1700)' (PhD thesis, Harvard, 2017), 82–144.

at critical passages, or a certain part of their population, were given *derbentçi* status. In this way, the Ottoman state used infrastructure policy to populate regions along roads.⁶¹

On the mountainous section of the Istanbul–Belgrade road east of Niš, the *derbentçi* institution was regularly employed. On the 100 kilometres of the route between Niš and Dragoman, the number of *derbent* villages increased from four in the middle of the fifteenth to fifteen at the end of the sixteenth century. Most of them were located between Niš and Mustafa Paşa Palanka (Bela Palanka), 50 kilometres to the east on the section where the road leaves the floodplain of the Nišava, which flows through a narrow canyon. The road crossed the mountains of the Suva Planina in three branches, which were protected by several *derbent* villages.⁶² As a natural barrier producing friction in the flow of mobility, this mountainous terrain served as a boundary in various territorial concepts, as will be shown below (fig. 2.3).

General investments in the travel infrastructure were complemented by the creation of special transport and communication networks under the direct control of the state. The Ottoman administration could rely on its own communication system, a service of couriers called *ulak*, who transported official letters and documents. An urgent message could be relayed from Istanbul to Belgrade in five days. This was only possible because couriers could change horses at designated stations called *menzil*, which were placed at fixed intervals along the main routes of the empire. Travelling officials could also use these *menzil* stations.⁶³ According to a late fifteenth-century census, there were 40 households in Niš obligated to keep horses ready for such official couriers. They were Christians possibly of Roma origin; in return for their services, they did not have to pay any of the extraordinary taxes the Ottoman state frequently levied.⁶⁴

Finally, the Ottoman army also needed viable roads and therefore had its own corps of specialists to maintain them. Before the army set out on a campaign, the judges (sg. *kadı*) of the districts along the marching route were ordered to collect food and fodder at certain designated halting points of the march. These could be the same as the civilian *menzil* stations, but to supply the great number of soldiers passing through, they could also be located at different places. In this way, administrative corridors (*kol*) with special arrangements to support military logistics emerged along the main marching routes of the army. The intensified

61 Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Derbent Teskilâtı* (Istanbul: Eren, 1990).

62 Katić, 'Transforming the Landscape', 93–101.

63 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, 'Menzil', *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 29, 159–161.

64 Bojanić, 'Niš do Velikog rata 1683', 119, 154, 168.

presence of the state offered the opportunity for the population in these areas to sell their products and services to the army.⁶⁵

Radiating out from Istanbul, there were three such corridors in Anatolia and three in Rumelia. The Rumelian Middle Corridor (*orta kol*), which formed along the Istanbul–Belgrade road, was of utmost strategical importance as a marching route for the Ottoman campaigns, first against Hungary and then against the Habsburg Monarchy.

The early European historiography on the Istanbul–Belgrade route, most famously Konstantin Jireček's 1877 monograph *Die Heerstraße von Belgrad nach Constantinopel* (*The Military Road from Belgrade to Constantinople*), has stressed this military aspect of the route. Although marching armies still played a role in the eighteenth century, the subsequent chapters will show that other dynamics of mobility on the route turned out to be more significant as the Ottoman-Habsburg confrontation eased. In the nineteenth century, the route turned into a cul-de-sac before it was revived again by the infrastructure development in the second half of the century.⁶⁶

2.2 The Town and Its Inhabitants

Because for all sixteenth and seventeenth-century travellers Niš was merely one of many stations on the route where they spent one or two nights, their observations were restricted to some first impressions. Besides the caravanserais and the bridge, most of them mention three mosques, a *hamam* (bath) and sometimes broken or dilapidated city walls. Even more condensed than these short descriptions in personal travel accounts were the entries in geographical dictionaries of the seventeenth century where Niš was categorised as an 'open market town'. In a German work, the city was compared it to the Swabian town of Dinkelsbühl, today a small town in Bavaria of 10,000 inhabitants, probably to give the German readers an impression from their own geographical experience. It is not clear why this particular town was chosen: possibly because of its size and its location at an important crossing of roads from the Baltic Sea to Italy and from Poland to the Rhine valley.⁶⁷

65 Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk*, Praeger Security International (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2009), 83–84.

66 Florian Riedler, 'The Istanbul–Belgrade Route in the Ottoman Empire: Continuity and Discontinuity of an Imperial Mobility Space', in *The Balkan Route: Historical Transformations from Via Militaris to Autoput*, ed. id. and Nenad Stefanov (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 105–122.

67 Theophilus Urbinus (Erasmus Francisci): *Türkisches Städte-Büchlein* (Nürnberg, 1664), 357; M. Zeiller, *Neue Beschreibung des Königreichs Ungarn* (Ulm: Kühn, 1646), 171; Salomon Kuselius (Küsel), *Dictionariolo Geographico* (Erfurt: Birckner, 1632), 154.

Evliya Çelebi gives the most culturally intimate description of Niš, where he stayed in 1660. The tireless Ottoman traveller mentions the names of the three biggest mosques, starting with the Mosque of Sultan Murad I, as well as the names of the three dervish lodges, and he also quotes the inscription on the bridge. Moreover, he describes a 'fort, a khan-like stone building', which had a warden but no regular garrison.⁶⁸ In general, Evliya paints the picture of an ordinary town, 'wooden houses covered with tiles and surrounded by gardens, imposing villas with several floors as well as houses of the poor'.⁶⁹ In his eyes, the principal mosque and bazaar were not too showy (he uses the expression 'ol kadar müzeyyen değil' twice), and the town also lacked a central commercial building (*bezistan*) of brick, having only 200 individual shops.

Two depictions of early modern Ottoman Niš visualised these impressionistic descriptions as we find them in travel accounts. Similar to the textual descriptions, these two images are closely connected to the route. Probably in the 1570s, an unknown European artist drew a series of city views that are collected in a manuscript known as the *Leiden Sketchbook*.⁷⁰ It presents drawings of several Ottoman cities located along the route from Vienna to Istanbul whence the artist travelled, possibly in the retinue of a Habsburg ambassador. The images in the sketchbook are stylised, but one can recognise some typical features of the depicted places. From a slightly elevated position in the north, the artist shows Niš stretching in front of the foothills of the Suva Planina (fig. 2.2). Two roads, one crossing an orchard, the other running along a graveyard, connect the observer's viewpoint to the town in the middle ground. The river and the bridge are not visible from this perspective. The urban fabric of the town itself is not very dense, which the artist indicates by showing trees and gardens in between the houses. The minarets of one larger and four smaller mosques stand out from the low-lying skyline of one-storey houses with gardens. In this way, Niš is presented as a lesser version of Sofia and Edirne, which follow later in the manuscript and are both characterised by an abundant skyline of minarets. Additionally, the artist depicts an elongated building in the centre of Niš, which may represent a caravanserai. In contrast to the images of Buda or Belgrade, which foreground the fortifications and walls of these cities, Niš is presented as an open town.

68 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, ed. Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman and İbrahim Sezgin (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996–2003), 5:188: 'zîrâ kal'ası şehir içinde hân-mişâl bir taş binâ bir kal'a ve bir bâbı var'.

69 Ibid., 'bağlı ve bağçeli ve serâpâ kiremit örtülü tahtânî ve fevkânî sarây-ı âlîler ve fukarâ hâneleridir'.

70 Luda Klusakova, 'Between Reality and Stereotype: Town Views of the Balkans', *Urban History* 28 (2001): 358–377.



Fig. 2.2: Niš in the Leiden Sketchbook, ca. 1570 by an unknown artist. Image courtesy of Leiden University Library, shelf mark VLO 50.

The only Ottoman depiction of Niš, although stylistically very different, confirms the general impression of a small town on the route. The miniature is part of an account of Sultan Süleyman's 1542 campaign to Hungary entitled *Tarih-i Feth-i Şikloş, Üstürgon ve İstol-Belgrad* (*History of the Conquest of Siklós, Esztergom and Székesfehérvár*). It was authored by the military officer and historian Matrakçı Nasuh (d. 1564) who was also the author of an earlier account of Süleyman's conquest of Baghdad. Both accounts combine a list of the principal marching stages and resting places of the respective campaigns with miniatures of some of these places. Taking inspiration from the Ottoman maritime atlases of the early sixteenth century, Nasuh implemented city views as an innovative feature of his campaign accounts, which aimed at a high degree of topographical accuracy. The illustrators of the miniatures probably could even rely on sketches done in situ, possibly by Nasuh himself as a participant in the campaigns. The results were stylised images that nonetheless tried to capture the situation of the city and also showed important details such as the principal mosques, shrines or fortifications. Beyond their significance as sources for certain localities, Nasuh's albums also give insight into the Ottoman understanding of territoriality, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.⁷¹

71 J.M. Rogers, 'Itineraries and Town Views in Ottoman History', in *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, ed. J.B. Harley and David Woodward, vol. 2.1, *The History of Cartography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 228–255.

The miniature⁷² representing the encampment of the Ottoman army at Niš shows the town in the upper half of the page, which is partitioned by the river Nišava in the middle. Apart from a few stylised trees, other natural features such as the characteristic hills, which the Leiden sketch shows, are omitted. In the bottom half of the page, the Ottoman army camp is indicated with a number of tents. Close to the river we also see a mosque, a well with a sweep (a lever mechanism to raise the bucket), two houses and a wall-like structure. The two halves of the image are connected by the Nišava bridge, which is additionally highlighted by its white colour, used in all the miniatures of the manuscript for important official buildings. The main part of the town, with stylised single-storey houses in a reddish-brown colour and a few official buildings in white, fills the upper half of the page, i.e. the northern bank of the river. For example, there are two stylised mosques and a building that could represent a *hamam*. Niš is depicted without major fortifications except for a small citadel-like structure on a hill beside the bridge as well as another place enclosed with palisades. In contrast, other cities, those in Hungary that the sultan was about to conquer, were depicted with surrounding walls and towers, giving them a foreign and war-like appearance.

In the context of the campaign account, the miniature stresses the specific function of the place as a river crossing and an encampment for the army. As is also confirmed by other contemporary campaign diaries,⁷³ the Ottoman army usually assembled on the south bank of the river, the place where the modern centre of the city developed starting in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the sixteenth century, this side was only sparsely settled, and even the mosque indicated in the miniature might not have actually been there because its existence cannot be confirmed by other sources such as the censuses, which we will discuss now.

Travellers' accounts and images give an impression of the general appearance of the town as well as its most important buildings, but they are less informative regarding its inhabitants. Some of the travellers comment on the urban elites, e.g. Evliya enumerates a number of Ottoman officials and functionaries such as a commander of the local *sipahi* cavalry (*kethüdâyeri*), a janissary commander (*yeniçeri serdârı*), a fortress commander (*dizdâr*), a police official (*subaşı*), revenue and toll collectors (*voyvada, bâcdâr*), a market inspector (*muhtesib*), and notables (*a'yân u eşrâf*) in a general sense; French ambassador de Hayes, who passed through Niš

72 Sinan Çavuş, *Tarih-i Feth-i Şikloş Estergon ve İstol[n]i-Belgrad or Süleymanname* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 1987), 51. This modern facsimile edition attributed Matrakçı Nasuh's work wrongly to one Sinan Çavuş.

73 Anton C. Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher des ersten und zweiten ungarischen Feldzugs Süleymans I.* (Wien: Verlag des Verbandes der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1978).

in 1621, also mentions that the *sipahis* of the surrounding countryside lived in the town in addition to a garrison of janissaries.⁷⁴ Further, most travellers from Europe took a keen interest in the Christian inhabitants of Niš, which most of them identify as Serbs. Dernschwam and Stephan Gerlach (1546–1612) who passed through Niš in 1573, mention a church. Both claim that other religious and regional groups were also part of the urban population, such as the Dalmatian/Ragusan merchants, Jews and Roma.

This sketchy information can be substantiated by Ottoman tax censuses (*tahrir*), which give insight into the urban population and its development that was not visible to the superficial glance of the travellers. The Ottoman government initiated regular censuses during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to assess the tax basis of each province, but they ceased in this form in the seventeenth century. Because in some of the censuses the major pious foundations with their donors and income were also registered, sometimes it is possible to follow prominent citizens and buildings in the city, too. The following overview will present the research on these censuses, which was undertaken in the 1970s by the Yugoslavian Ottomanist Dušanka Bojanić.

The first surviving census dating from 1498 shows the situation of the recovered town after the period of constant warfare and destruction in the first half of the fifteenth century. With 310 taxpaying households, Niš was still a very small place. The majority consisted of 166 Muslim households who lived in three quarters (*mahalle*). Such quarters, which were grouped around a mosque, were the principal building blocks of Ottoman towns and cities. They were social urban territories but were also used as tax and registration units by the state. The biggest and probably the oldest of these quarters centred on the mosque of Sultan Murad I, which was also called the Emperor's Mosque (Hünkâr Camii), located in the northern part of the eighteenth-century fortress. The two other quarters were probably located nearer to the river, one of them, Köprübaşı, directly at the head of the bridge as its name indicates. With 144 households, the Christian community was slightly smaller than that of the Muslims. Among them were many widow and bachelor households. In contrast to the Muslims, the Christian population was not differentiated into quarters and therefore it is not possible to locate them more precisely within the town. It is not known whether they lived in a separate area or intermingled with the Muslims. In this as well as the following censuses, the Christian community had only one or two priests.⁷⁵

74 Louis Deshayes de Courmenin, *Voyage de Levant fait par le commandement du Roy en l'année 1621 par le Sr D. C.* (Paris: A. Taupinart, 1624), 65.

75 Bojanić, 'Niš Do Velikog Rata 1683', 118–123, analysing BOA, TT.d... 27.

Until 1515, the time of the next census, Niš had grown quite considerably to 375 households. This was due to an increase in the Muslim population, still distributed among three quarters, while the number of Christians had slightly declined. A new quarter had been formed around the Bazaar Mosque (Çarşı Camii) substituting for one quarter that had vanished, probably because its mosque had burned down.⁷⁶

The trend of an expanding population was broken in the next decade. The census of 1528 only lists 208 households. As happened in other Balkan cities, most probably the conquest of Belgrade in 1521 was responsible for this drop.⁷⁷ It seems that the missing Muslim inhabitants of Niš were ordered to settle in the newly conquered centre on the Danube. But more mundane reasons such as an epidemic or a big fire may also have been the reason for the decline in population. Moreover, apparently one of the now-five Muslim quarters was not registered thoroughly, so the loss in population might not have been as dramatic as it appears at first glance. The previous trend of a shrinking Christian community, in 1528 consisting of 63 households, continued.⁷⁸

In the next preserved census, that of 1568, the number of 317 registered households shows that urban growth had picked up again. There were ever fewer Christians in the town, as compared to the Muslims who now inhabited six quarters. Among them was the quarter of the Edirneli Bali Mosque, which had already been donated in the 1520s by a rich inhabitant, possibly the manager of a rice plantation, but apparently a regular quarter had only developed later. This mosque, which was located in the western part of the eighteenth-century fortress, withstood the end of the Ottoman period and remains the oldest surviving building in present-day Niš.⁷⁹

The last preserved census, which was conducted during the reign of Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95) yet cannot be dated more precisely, again, exhibits a decreasing population. It lists altogether only 220 households, of which 190 were Muslims distributed among ten quarters, and 30 Christians. Thus, the Muslim-Christian ratio had further shifted in favour of the Muslims. One reason for the steadily declining number of Christians was a considerable number of converts. Bojanić's analysis of the names in the censuses has shown that among the Muslim

⁷⁶ Ibid., 124–126, analysing TT.d... 1007.

⁷⁷ Grigor Bojkov, *Ottoman Plovdiv: Space, Architecture, and Population (14th–17th Centuries)* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2024), 190–197.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 126–127.

inhabitants of Niš during the whole of the sixteenth century, approximately 30 per cent were new Muslims.⁸⁰

The censuses of the sixteenth century give little information as to other religious and ethnic groups in the town. The Catholic Ragusan merchants who were mentioned in many other sources were not listed because they did not pay taxes in Niš and therefore were not considered regular residents. Jews, too, were completely missing. In contrast, Roma were well represented in the district of Niš. Like other mobile groups such as the Vlachs, they were registered in *katun*, groups of several households, of which there were Christian, Muslim and mixed ones. However, it is not clear where these households were located and whether any of them had permanently settled in the villages of the district or in Niš itself.⁸¹

In summary, sixteenth-century Niš was quite a small place whose population fluctuated around 300 households. In comparison, even among the 111 villages in the district of Niš, there were a handful that had a population of over 100 households at the end of the fifteenth century.⁸² Niš was comparable with other urban settlements in the region such as Pirot (Ott. Şehirköy) with 200–250 households, but much smaller than the regional centres. For example, Sofia grew from 700 to almost 1,500 households at the end of the sixteenth century; Vidin, which started from a similar size as Niš, also grew until it almost reached 1,000 households at the end of the same period; Belgrade, which became Ottoman only in 1521, started from a modest base of 420 households, attained 800 in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and continued to grow in the seventeenth century, when we no longer have Ottoman census data.⁸³ However, even these larger cities in the wider region were small compared to the metropolises in Ottoman Europe such as Salonica (Ott. Selanik) with 4,860, Edirne with 4,060, not to mention Istanbul with over 16,000 households in the 1520s.⁸⁴

Unfortunately, the development of Niš in the seventeenth century cannot be followed in this quantitative way because tax censuses are not extant. Evliya gives the size of the city as 2,060 houses, but this number certainly does not rely on any official sources.

80 Ibid., 133–134. This figure corresponds well to the number of new Muslims in Plovdiv that amounted to 28 per cent in the tax census of 1516. Bojkov, *Plovdiv*, 182.

81 Ibid., 153–154.

82 Ibid., 108.

83 These numbers are taken from the respective entries of the cities in the *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*.

84 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, 'Essai sur les données statistiques des registres de recensement dans l'Empire ottoman aux XVe et XVIe siècles', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1, no. 1 (1957): 35.

2.3 Ottoman Territoriality and Mobility

In the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman administrative structure, Niš was the centre of a district (*nahiye*). This was the basic unit to group and organise military and financial resources as personified by the *sipahi*, the Ottoman cavalry soldier with his prebendal landholding called *timar*. In the sixteenth century, the district of Niš comprised around 80 *sipahis*.⁸⁵ At the same time, Niš also was the centre of the district of a judge (*kadı*) called *kadılık* or *kaza*. Besides their judicial and notary functions, Ottoman judges also played an important role in the urban and provincial administration because they were in direct communication with the central government. While in the beginning the *nahiye* and the *kaza* of Niš still comprised slightly different areas, from the middle of the sixteenth century onward they began to coincide.⁸⁶

The district of Niš covered an oval-shaped area 60 kilometres in a north–south direction and 30 kilometres in a west–east direction. Niš was located in the northern third of the district, which comprised the floodplain of the Southern Morava and Nišava rivers together with the hilly country to the north-east. To the west, the Morava, which was joined by its tributary Nišava flowing in from the east, formed the border to the district of Ürgüb (Serb. Prokuplje). The remaining two thirds of the Niš district located in the south extended over the foothills of the Suva Planina whose main range, rising to 1,500 meters, formed the border to the district of Şehirköy in the east.⁸⁷

This administratively defined territory was very stable from the sixteenth century to the end of the Ottoman period as a list of landed property in the *kaza* from 1878 shows, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.1. Arguably, the Ottoman *kaza* is still visible today in the modern administrative borders of Serbia. It roughly corresponds to the municipalities (sg. *opština*) of Niš in the north, Gadžin Han in the south-east and Doljevac in the south-west. Ultimately, the form of the district seems to have been determined by the accessibility of Niš as a central marketplace for the villages of the rural hinterland. In turn, these relations were fixed in the *nahiye/kaza* administration, whose basic purpose was the administration of landownership and the control of agricultural production.⁸⁸

85 Bojanić, 'Niš do Velikog rata 1683', 111.

86 Ibid, 113.

87 Ibid., 107.

88 Richard Busch-Zantner, *Agrarverfassung und Siedlung in Südosteuropa: Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Türkenzeit* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1938), 142.

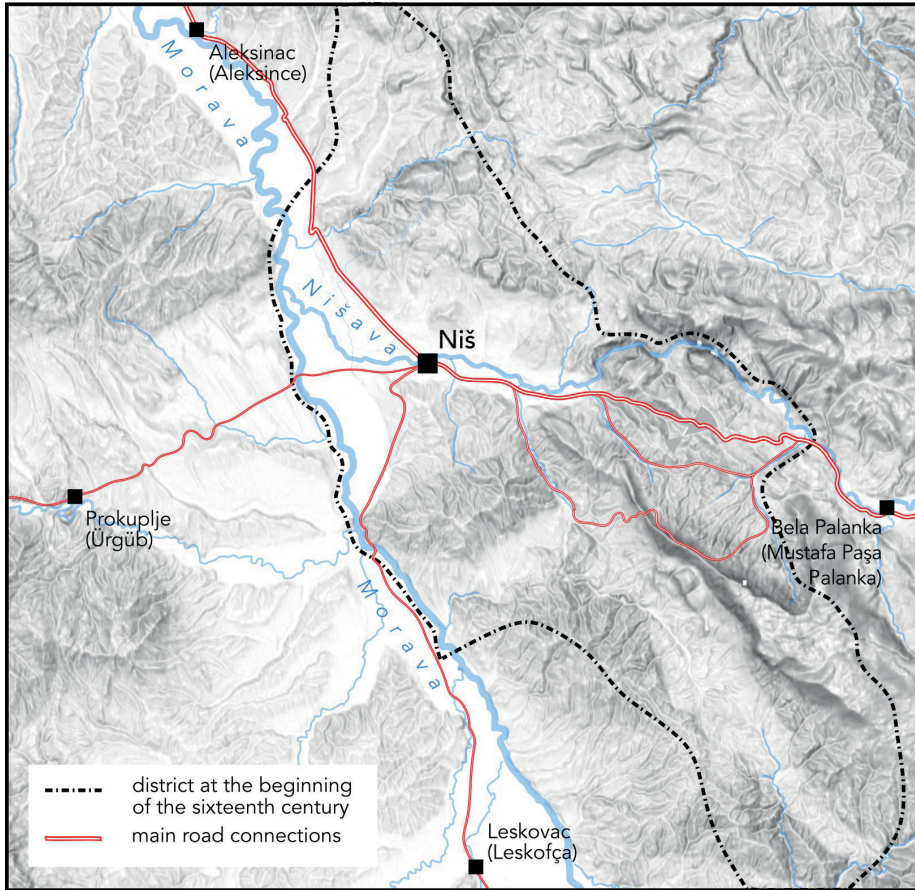


Fig. 2.3: The *nahiye* of Niš at the beginning of the sixteenth century (source: Bojanić, 'Niš Do Velikog Rata 1683', 109) with the main road connections in Ottoman times.

In contrast, the position of Niš in the larger framework of provincial administration was more volatile. At first, Niš was a part of the sub-province of Kruševac (Ott. *sancak* or *liva* of Alacahisar), a town 60 kilometres north-west of Niš, which had become the centre of a Serbian principality in the late fourteenth century before it was finally incorporated into the Ottoman Empire around 1450. The *sancak* was organised as the base for further conquests in the region. When Smederevo (Ott. Semendire), a Hungarian bridgehead located on the southern shore of the Danube 50 kilometres west of Belgrade, was conquered in 1459 and became the centre of a separate *sancak*, the district of Niš was added to it and remained part of it with short interruptions until the late seventeenth century. Consequently, when Smederevo became part of the newly formed province (*eyalet*

or *beylerbeylik*) of Buda in 1541, Niš also ceased to be part of Rumelia (Ott. *Rumili*) with its centre at Sofia. But these borders were flexible, at least in military organisation; sometimes the *sipahis* of Niš also joined the host of the governor (*beylerbeyi*) of Rumelia.⁸⁹

Niš was most likely attached to Smederevo to make this strategic border province militarily stronger and also financially more attractive so that it could be assigned to an experienced governor. Especially urban revenues such as market dues and taxes on craft production, but also impositions on gardens and vineyards in or near the city were often allocated to *sancak* governors. The more concentrated and the more accessible a source of revenue was, the easier it was to exploit. Therefore, governors sometimes declined revenue from outlying villages because it was just too cumbersome to collect them.⁹⁰ In this way, provinces were not just random collections of revenue sources as it sometimes appears at first glance, but rather had a geographical and infrastructural logic as well. Niš was easily accessible by road from Smederevo and later from Belgrade, where the centre of the *sancak* was moved after 1521.

On a larger scale, the Buda province, which was formed in 1541 to organise and secure those parts of Hungary conquered by the Ottomans, offers another example of this infrastructural logic. The new province not only comprised territories in Hungary, but attached to it were also sub-provinces to the south such as Smederevo and Kruševac in central Serbia, Zvornik (Ott. *İzvornik*) in eastern Bosnia and Vushtrria (Serb. Vučitrn, Ott. *Vilçitrin*) in Kosovo. Gradually, Buda lost many of these outlying *sancaks* and it was reduced to the axis Buda–Belgrade. Evidently, the province was held together by the waterway of the Danube where the Ottomans organised a river fleet with bases in both cities. Smederevo was responsible for providing ships and supplies during times of war. At the same time, the governor of the *sancak* was also charged with repairing the roads and bridges of the whole province.⁹¹ Evidently, apart from the Danube, the road from Buda to Belgrade that extended south to Niš was the second transport infrastructure that shaped the province. The mountain passes south of Niš acted as a natural breaking point on the route and therefore formed the border to the *sancak* of Sofia, which was the seat of the governor of the province of Rumelia.

Mobility and transport infrastructures were not only highly significant for military logistics and key to shaping administrative territories such as districts and

⁸⁹ Bojanić, 'Niš do Velikog rata 1683', 107.

⁹⁰ Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 16–26.

⁹¹ Sadık Müfit Bilge, *Osmanlı'nın Macaristanı: Osmanlı Hâkimiyetindeki Macaristan'ın Tarihi Coğrafyası ve İdari Taksimâtı, 1526–1718* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2010), 217–218.

provinces. They also had an imprint on the conception of Ottoman territoriality on a higher level; road axes such as the Istanbul–Belgrade route structured the mental maps of the Ottoman elite who circulated on these routes as civilian and military officers. This can be demonstrated by returning to the campaign albums by Matrakçı Nasuh that were introduced above. As the art historian Kathryn Ebel has shown,⁹² the miniatures in his manuscripts are not only a source of information on the individual cities and places they depict, but as a series they represent the empire in its territorial expanse. Cities were central to this representation because they were nodes where state power was concentrated, the most essential of them being those along the main routes and those at the frontiers of the empire. ‘The visual image of a sequence of interconnected points was particularly useful in representing two types of geographical spaces that defined the territoriality of the pre-modern Ottoman Empire – roads, or transects, and frontiers.’⁹³ In Matrakçı’s album of the 1543 Hungarian campaign the cities in these two geographical spaces are juxtaposed regarding their iconography. While the cities and encampments on the route to the frontier are open, the cities at the frontier are fortress cities adorned with walls and fortifications.

Another example of the way in which routes defined Ottoman mental maps is Ottoman geographical writing wherein they figure as an organising principle. A case in point is the work *Cihannüma* (*View of the World*), a compilation of contemporary geographical knowledge by the famous Ottoman encyclopaedist Katib Çelebi (1609–57), composed and continuously revised in the second quarter of the seventeenth century.⁹⁴ In the manuscript version of the book, in the chapter which describes the Rumelian clime (*iklim-i Rum*) comprising Anatolia and the Balkans, Katib Çelebi uses the three administrative corridors to structure his enumeration of the *sancaks* and *kazas* of Rumelia. After describing the three Ottoman capitals, Istanbul, Bursa and Edirne, the description follows the right corridor (*sağ kol*) until its farthest stage at Bender at the mouth of the Dniester and from there moves up the Danube to Vidin. He starts anew with the description of the middle corridor (*orta kol*) up to Sofia. In this description, Niš is included in the *sancak* of Sofia as the westernmost city in the area of the *orta kol*. From Niš it takes

92 Kathryn Ebel, ‘City Views, Imperial Visions: Cartography and the Visual Culture of Urban Space in the Ottoman Empire, 1453–1603’ (PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2002); Kathryn A. Ebel, ‘Representations of the Frontier in Ottoman Town Views of the Sixteenth Century’, *Imago Mundi* 60, no. 1 (2008): 1–22.

93 Ebel, ‘City Views, Imperial Visions’, 177.

94 Gottfried Hagen, *Ein osmanischer Geograph bei der Arbeit: Entstehung und Gedankenwelt von Kâtib Çelebis Ğihännümâ* (Berlin: Schwarz, 2003).

three days to travel to Sofia and 16–17 days to Istanbul.⁹⁵ Then the description of Rumelia continues with the left corridor (*sol kol*) to Salonica before redirecting to Üsküb (Skopje). At the end he adds outlying provinces such as Morea, the Adriatic coast and Hungary. For each city the location is defined by the travel time to Istanbul and the neighbouring cities, which produces a descriptive map that does not highlight borders and spatial expanses of territorial units but rather rests on routes and the connection of cities.

This effect is supported by sketched maps in the tradition of strip or portolan maps, which Katib Çelebi included in the manuscript version of the work. These are often arranged along the path of a river, much like other and more elaborate Ottoman river maps, e.g. of the Euphrates or the Nile. This evidence provoked Gottfried Hagen, the expert on Ottoman geography, to make the following evaluation:

In a way, it is quite possible that entire mental maps of the Ottoman Empire were more structured by means of axes of movement than conceived as two-dimensional expanses. The axes here might for instance be provided by the main roads radiating from Istanbul to the European provinces, known as *sağ kol*, *orta kol*, and *sol kol*, in reflection of the perspective from Istanbul.⁹⁶

Throughout the Ottoman period, the Istanbul–Belgrade road put Niš on the geographical and mental maps of the contemporaries. The mobility connected with the route shaped processes of territorialisation within the city, but also determined the place of the city in the territorial makeup of the empire. This location remained a given until the end of the Ottoman era – and arguably continues until today. However, at the end of the seventeenth century a new factor shaping Niš as a city and its urban life quite suddenly appeared. This was the new border between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy that was drawn at the Danube and Sava rivers. The next chapter will examine how this factor restructured the city in a lasting way.

95 Mustafa Ben Abdalla Hadschi Chalfa, *Rumeli und Bosna geographisch beschrieben*, transl. by Joseph von Hammer (Wien: Kunst- und Industrie-Comptoirs, 1812), 58.

96 Gottfried Hagen, 'Kâtib Çelebi's Maps and the Visualization of Space in Ottoman Culture', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 40 (2012): 283–293.

3 An Imperial Border City



Fig. 3.1: Istanbul Gate of Niš fortress with the most recent version of the bridge over the Nišava. Photo by Florian Riedler, 2012.

The fortress whose massive stone walls stretch along the shores of the Nišava opposite the city centre dominates the parts of Niš north of the river to this day. The Yugoslavian Army used it until the 1960s, before it was converted into a park where citizens as well as occasional tourists can take a stroll and have a coffee or a cold drink in one of the bars. The Istanbul Gate located immediately at the bridge serves as the main entrance from the city centre on the other side. It betrays its origin by an Ottoman inscription, which is hard to decipher because of its weathered

condition and its position high above the heads of the passers-by. On the square behind the gate there are other remnants of the Ottoman past: immediately to the left an old Turkish bath that is now a restaurant aptly called Hamam as well as the Ottoman arsenal, which houses a museum. Further towards the centre of the fortress, the former Edirneli Bali Mosque has been restored and today serves as an exhibition space. Recently, two Ottoman powder magazines on top of the walls have also been restored.

With the construction of the fortress a new phase in the history of Niš began that coincided with the establishment of the new Habsburg-Ottoman border in the region at the turn of the seventeenth century. In the central focus of this chapter are the repercussions the reorganisation of Ottoman state territory had on the reorganisation of urban territories in Niš. More concretely, the chapter will examine the effect of the new border on the architecture and population structure of the city as well as its function in the network of cities in Ottoman Europe. During the period between the Ottoman defeat at Vienna in 1683 and the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739 Niš evolved from a small town that was securely located inside the Ottoman Empire and was mainly characterised by its function as a stop on the Istanbul–Belgrade road to an imperial border city. As such, Niš was under a constant military threat and in fact was conquered twice by Habsburg troops in 1689 and 1737. However, each time the Ottomans re-conquered it after a short while. The physical destruction during these wars as well as the flight of large parts of its population required a reconstruction that accounted for the new geopolitical situation. The construction of the fortress together with the reorganisations of urban space in general are the most visible architectural consequences of this situation. Another aspect fundamentally transforming Niš as compared to its previous state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the reorganisation of urban life and the way how different groups of urban populations were living together.

This chapter will approach these developments from the middle of the indicated period, when, after the 1718 peace treaty of Passarowitz (today Požarevac in Serbia), Niš became the principal city on the border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. In 1719, Gerhard Cornelius von den Driesch, the secretary of the Habsburg ambassador, gave a particularly detailed description of the city on his way to Istanbul. His report will serve as convenient entry point to the chapter, which will also use the maps Habsburg military intelligence produced of the city, Ottoman chronicles, bureaucratic sources and censuses for examining how the city was reshaped in the first half of the eighteenth century.

To set the stage, the first section will introduce the broader political and military developments that made Niš a border city by examining the Habsburg-Ottoman border regime as a result of the geopolitical competition between the two empires. The second section will then zoom in on the city to examine the construction of

the fortress as a collaborative outcome of this inter-imperial rivalry. In different phases, both empires were responsible for its construction, re-design and renovation. This section will discuss the extent to which Niš can count as an example of a 'military urbanism', i.e. an urban design, which reshaped cities throughout early modern Europe by completely reconfiguring them to make them fit the requirements of the military. Fortresses were the most visible outcome of this process as real buildings but also as images and a topic in war propaganda. The many maps and depictions of eighteenth-century Niš that filled European atlases and albums can only be understood if this frame is carefully considered.

The next section will turn to the consequences of this military development for urban life. Most notably, the co-habitation between different religious groups, Muslims, Christians, Jews and Roma, and their claim to urban space was subjected to fundamental changes, which were dependent on the priorities of Ottoman imperial governance. These oscillated between the fear of collaboration of Ottoman Christians with the Habsburg invaders and the wish for conciliation to strengthen their loyalty. The section will focus on the effect this had for the re-ordering of urban space.

The last section of this chapter will attempt a regional comparison. Like Niš, cities such as Belgrade and Vidin were also redesigned as fortress cities. They can serve as comparative cases for a broader picture of the mechanisms of urban life in eighteenth-century Ottoman border cities. Especially the relationship between Muslims and Christians seems to have changed under the restructuring effect of the border with its repercussions on urban territories and boundaries.

3.1 Ottoman-Habsburg Border Relations

In summer 1719, the border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, which ran through what are today the Šumadija and Morava Regions in Central Serbia, was demarcated with three stone columns at a meadow south of Paraćin off the Istanbul–Belgrade road.⁹⁷ These columns were erected to make the border visible for an exchange of ambassadors, which had been agreed upon by the two states in the 1718 peace treaty of Passarowitz. In the book about his journey to Istanbul, Gerhard Cornelius von denDriesch, the secretary of the Habsburg ambassador, gives a vivid description of this exchange. Questions of protocol at

97 The exact location of the border is marked on a map in the Vienna War Archive, Kriegsarchiv (KA), KPS, K I a 1–1 E. With an incredible historical instinct the Turkish operated chain of motorway service stations 'Bayburtlu'nun Yeri' put one of their restaurants at this very spot in present-day Pojate.

the moment when the parties crossed the border were treated with great care. Both ambassadors with their delegations met at the demarcated spot; approaching each other, they dismounted at the outer columns and walked towards the middle one that was placed exactly on the border line. There, greeting messages were exchanged together with coffee, chocolate and fruit before the two ambassadors were to cross the border. Both were literally handed over to the welcoming official on the other side of the border line. The two retinues of over 700 men and the escorting army detachments stayed behind the two outer columns, eyeing each other and marking the moment of exchange with music: Janissary style from the one side, trumpet fanfares from the other. Next, the two delegations moved on: the Ottoman ambassador Ibrahim Pasha was escorted to Belgrade, while the Habsburg ambassador Count Virmond together with his retinue, including Driesch, to Niš or Nissa as it was called in its Neo-Latin form by the Habsburgs.⁹⁸

Before we follow Driesch to Niš and examine in detail his description of the city, it is necessary to reflect on the border, which provides the geopolitical background for the urban development in focus below. The exchange of ambassadors described above took place according to forms that had developed in the preceding one hundred years. Since the late fifteenth century, Ottoman-Habsburg diplomatic relations had been conducted by low-ranking special envoys. In the early seventeenth century these diplomatic contacts were upgraded by ever larger and more important diplomatic missions. These so-called Great Embassies (*Großbotschaften*), of which the famous 1554 mission of Busbecq was an early example, began to travel between Vienna and Istanbul along the route crossing Niš. The first mutual exchange of ambassadors at the border between the two empires was staged in 1628. In this and the following missions Habsburg and Ottoman diplomats worked out a complicated set of rules of conduct. To the degree to which their military superiority weakened during the seventeenth century, the Ottomans had to give in to the Habsburg demand to be treated as equal partners in their diplomatic exchanges. Arrangements concerned the titles of address for the rulers and other officials as well as the ceremony on the occasion of the exchange of ambassadors. This concerned e.g. the meeting point, the question

98 Gerhard Cornelius von den Driesch, *Historische Nachricht von Der Röm. Kayserl. Groß-Botschaft Nach Constantinopel* (Nürnberg: Peter Conrad Monath, 1723), 48–56. The whole scene was visualised in fifteen engravings and published as a booklet in 1720, see Ana Milošević, 'The Festival Book for the Exchange of Austrian and Turkish Deputations in 1719', in *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 239–253.

of the order in which the representatives were to descend from their horses, sit, speak, exchange gifts, etc.⁹⁹

While the ceremonial forms of exchange became well established over time, it was the location of exchange that moved, indicating the expansion of the Habsburg Monarchy into Central and Southeast Europe and the retreat of the Ottomans. In the first half of the seventeenth century the exchange of ambassadors usually took place in western Hungary between the fortresses of Esztergom (Ott. Estergon, Germ. Gran), Komárno (Hung. Komarom, Germ. Komorn) and Győr (Germ. Raab, Ott. Yanikkale). After the Ottoman defeat at Vienna and the ensuing wars of the Holy League, the border moved south in several stages.¹⁰⁰ In 1688 after protracted siege warfare in Hungary that lasted several years, the Habsburgs and their allies captured Belgrade and pushed south down the valley of the Morava. In summer 1689, Margrave Louis William of Baden conquered Niš as the emperor's supreme commander; however, the city had to be given up in the following year as did subsequently all territory south of the Danube that the Habsburg armies had controlled earlier. In 1699 the peace treaty of Karlowitz ended the war and awarded to the Habsburgs Hungary and Transylvania except for the Banat, the region around the city of Timișoara (Ott. Temeșvar, Germ. Temeswar). The exchange of envoys to ratify this treaty took place near the village Slankamen (Serb. Salankamen) north-west of Belgrade, where, possibly for the first time, three columns were used to frame the ceremony.¹⁰¹ The rendezvous-point moved south of the Danube to the indicated meadow south of Paraćin after the war of 1716–18, when peace was restored with the treaty of Passarowitz. In the war of 1737–39 the Ottomans were able to regain Belgrade, which became the principal border crossing for the next century. The first exchange of ambassadors after that war took place on a pontoon in the middle of the river Sava, which separated Belgrade from Zemun (Germ. Semlin) on the Habsburg side.¹⁰²

99 Karl Teply, 'Türkische Gesandtschaften nach Wien (1488–1792)', *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 20 (1976).

100 For a detailed account of the wars of the Holy League, see Ivan Pärvev, *Habsburgs and Ottomans Between Vienna and Belgrade (1683–1739)* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1995).

101 Simpert Niggel, *Reisebeschreibung von Wien nach Konstantinopel*, ed. Inga Pohlmann (Konstanz: Isale, 2005), 39–40. The ambassador did not proceed to Niš, but went by boat to Nikopolis and crossed the Balkan mountains to reach Edirne.

102 Gerhard Fritsch, *Paschas und Pest: Gesandtschaft am Bosphorus* (Graz: Stiasny, 1962), 40–45.



Fig. 3.2: The Ottoman-Habsburg border 1689–1739. Cartography by Florian Riedler.

As a common stipulation in these succeeding peace treaties the new borders were not only fixed on maps, but also carefully demarcated in the landscape. Both states wanted to come as close as possible to a linear border to put an end to the fluctuating and unstable status that had characterised Hungary as a borderland. In the face of their own military weakness, the Ottomans hoped that this would protect their remaining territory. Because of this apparently fundamental change in territorial thinking from the open frontier-like border space to a linear border, older scholarship has awarded the Treaty of Karlowitz an extraordinary place in

Ottoman political and diplomatic history.¹⁰³ Recent studies have shown that, in fact, this was not such a new development. At Karlowitz the Habsburg-Ottoman border at Danube and Sava was shaped in a fashion that had already been common for the Ottoman-Venetian border since the fourteenth century. Likewise, parts of the border between the Ottoman Empire and Poland-Lithuania had already been demarcated in 1633 and in 1680, while on other parts of their border this was not regarded as necessary.¹⁰⁴ However, while the practicalities of border management at Karlowitz could draw on older forms tested elsewhere, it is true that some contradictions with the Ottoman imperial ideology remained. 'Closing the frontier' sparked opposition, especially by groups who made their living by raiding in the frontier zones such as the Tatars, or the professional military that had most to gain from an expanding frontier.¹⁰⁵

In the two years following the conclusion of the Karlowitz treaty a joint Ottoman-Habsburg commission undertook the task of demarcating the border between the two states. We know next to nothing about Ibrahim Efendi, the Ottoman representative, while the Habsburg side was represented by the well-known figure Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658–1730). Marsigli was a scientist and diplomat who had been in Istanbul as the secretary of the Venetian envoy before he entered the service of the emperor as a military officer from 1681 to 1704.¹⁰⁶ The border commission worked its way from the extreme western point, dubbed the *triplex confinium*, where the Ottoman, Habsburg and Venetian borders met to the point in Transylvania where the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire bordered on Walachia, which remained an Ottoman vassal state. For the most part, rivers like Una, Sava, Danube, Tisza and Maros as well as mountain ridges served as natural borders. Under the contemporary hydrologic conditions, this was not as clear cut as it may sound: periodic inundations, frequently shifting riverbeds and islands within the streams kept the demarcation commission occupied and caused continuous negotiations between the parties. Where rivers or mountain ridges were not available, the commission had to create artificial borders with stones, pillars or other visible signs. It was Marsigli who surveyed the whole area for the first time and produced maps that showed not only the course

103 Rifaat A. Abou-El-Haj, 'Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 87, no. 4 (1967): 498–512.

104 Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, 'Between Universalistic Claims and Reality: Ottoman Frontiers in the Early Modern Period', in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2012), 205–219.

105 Rifaat A. Abou-El-Haj, 'The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe, 1699–1703', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89, no. 3 (1969): 467–475.

106 See the authoritative biography by John Stoye, *Marsigli's Europe: The Life and Times of Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, Soldier and Virtuoso* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1994).

of the border, but also indicated possibilities for economic and infrastructural development. Thus, the military, hand in hand with science, redefined the areas as borderlands.¹⁰⁷

The 1718 peace treaty of Passarowitz built on the example of its predecessor in both form and content. It ended the short Habsburg-Ottoman war of 1716–18 into which the Habsburg government had been drawn because of its treaty of alliance with Venice. Under the command of Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736) the Habsburg armies conquered Belgrade and Timișoara as well as the northern part of Serbia south of the Danube. At the peace conference in Požarevac (Germ. Passarowitz), a village roughly at equidistance between Belgrade and Niš, these new borders were fixed using the principle of *uti possidetis*, according to which each side was to keep its military gains. The Ottomans had strongly rejected the demand from the Habsburg negotiators to hand over the whole region that would have also made Vidin and Niš part of the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the border question, a separate treaty concluded later the same year also regulated trade and economic relations between the two states. These economic relations were to become important in the second half of the eighteenth century and will be treated in greater detail in chapter 4.4.

The territorial status quo that made Niš a city close to the border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire lasted for roughly 20 years. It changed in the Habsburg-Ottoman war of 1736–39, when the Habsburg army occupied Niš for a short period, before the Ottomans retook it and were also able to conquer Belgrade.¹⁰⁹ After the war a team of surveyors set out to demarcate the new border, which was again fixed at the Danube and Sava. The preserved report of the Ottoman official Abu Sahl Numan Efendi gives a good sense of the process as it was seen from the Ottoman side.¹¹⁰

As this section has shown, the half century from 1683 to 1739 was characterised by constant warfare, shifting borders and an evolving border regime between

107 Ibid., 164–215; Antal A. Deák: ‘Zur Geschichte der Grenzabmarkung nach dem Friedensvertrag von Karlowitz’, in *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie*, ed. Marlene Kurz et. al. (Wien: Oldenbourg, 2005), 83–96.

108 Rhoads Murphey, ‘Twists and Turns in the Diplomatic Dialogue: The Politics of Peacemaking in the Early Eighteenth Century’, in *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*, ed. Charles Ingrao, Nikola Samardžić and Jovan Pešalj (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 73–91; Nancy Walker, ‘Territorial Transfers at Passarowitz, 1718’, *East European Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1983): 391–400.

109 Karl A. Roider, ‘The Perils of Eighteenth-Century Peacemaking: Austria and the Treaty of Belgrade, 1739’, *Central European History* 5, no. 3 (1972): 195–207.

110 Abu Sahl Numan, *Molla und Diplomat: Der Bericht des Ebû Sehîl Nu'mân Efendi über die österreichisch-osmanische Grenzziehung nach dem Belgrader Frieden 1740/41* (Graz: Styria, 1972).

the two imperial rivals in the Danube area. The next section will focus more closely on the impact this situation had on the function, morphology, and the urban life of cities in the region. Niš changed fundamentally, turning from a city in the heart of Ottoman territory to one situated in the borderlands of the empire. This was no longer the expanding frontier of the fifteenth and sixteenth century in which cities had played the role of springboards for conquering Ottoman armies. Now, at the turn of the seventeenth century, the offensive had switched to the defensive. In the words of the Ottoman historian Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Pasha, cities such as Timișoara, Belgrade, Niš or Vidin were conceived of as ‘bulwarks of Islam’ (*sedd-i sedid-i İslâmiyyeden*).¹¹¹ The concrete architectural and functional meaning of this label and its ideological implications were also captured by Driesch when he passed Niš on his way to Istanbul in 1719. At a time when Niš was in the first Ottoman line of defence, his report describes particularly well the city’s transformation, which concerned not only its architecture and cityscape, but also its collective psyche.

3.2 Fortress and City, 1690–1719–1737

Arriving in Niš four days after the ceremony at the border described above, Gerhard Cornelius von den Driesch was most impressed by the fortress, the outline of which has yet not changed significantly. According to Driesch’s description, the fortress protected the part of the city on the right bank of the Nišava with a bastioned rampart and a double glacis with covered ways and ditches in between. This part of the city was completely hidden behind the ramparts so that only the minarets of the mosques remained visible from the outside. In contrast, the city south of the river, the present-day centre, was only surrounded by a wall with a parapet and a ditch. To protect the bridge, there was a hornwork on the south side of the river, which was surrounded by a ditch filled with water. Both parts of the city were built up with low wooden houses in an irregular manner.¹¹²

Driesch had to admit that his observations were only superficial because the Habsburg party was not allowed to move around freely in the city. Officially, the Ottoman administration had imposed these restrictions because of an outbreak of the plague. However, in Driesch’s opinion this was just a pretext to hide the fortifications from foreigners. As it turned out, the fears of the Ottoman authorities were well grounded. One member of the mission was a Habsburg military

111 Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekayiât Tahlil ve Metin* (1066–1116/1656–1704), ed. Abdulkadir Özcan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), 726.

112 Driesch, *Historische Nachricht*, 65–67.

engineer who had already visited the city in 1718 as part of the border commission and now drew several plans of the fortifications, including the left bank portion of the city. Although these plans were not the result of a proper triangulation but relied only on the engineer's visual inspection, they became the blueprint for many maps of Niš produced in later decades.¹¹³

According to these plans, the city was divided into the upper town or main fortress (*Obere Stadt oder Haupt Vestung*) and the lower town or big *palanka* (*unter Stadt oder große Pallanka*), *palanka* being the Ottoman designation for a settlement protected by a ring of wooden palisades. Additionally, there was a hornwork at the head of the bridge connecting the two parts. There was also the small *palanka* (*disseitige kleine Pallanka*), a quarter southwest of the fortress situated between the fortress walls and the river. The fortress had three gates: one opening towards the north, one towards the river to the south east, and the other to the small *palanka*. The Ottomans called these the Vidin Gate, Sofya Gate and Belgrad Gate, but these names were not indicated on the Austrian plan. Additionally, there were four gates in the wall of the lower town and one in the wall surrounding the small *palanka* opening to the road leading to Belgrade. Beyond the walls of the lower town to the south, the plan also indicates a suburb; to the west of the fortress there was an abandoned suburb.

With its bastioned fortress, Niš had acquired an architectural feature that it shared with many cities in early modern Europe. In her magisterial study *Cities at War* Martha Pollak has described in detail the effect of military architecture on European cities from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ It is her central

113 There are at least three versions of the map by Engineer Captain C.F. v. (or O.F.V.) Öbschelwitz with different dates from 1718 to 1720: 1. 'Plan der Türckischen Gräntz Festung Nissa in Servien wie sich solche im Monath Junio Anno 1719 befunden und zwar so gut man dieselbe 1718 im Monath April gegen die Belgrader Seiten von ferne wahrnehmen können...', Riksarkivet, Stockholm, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/bildvisning/K0004799_00001; 2. 'Plan von der türck. Gräntz Festung Nissa im Königreich Servien. Wie sich solche im Junio 1719 befunden...', National Széchényi Library, Budapest, TK 533, <https://maps.hungaricana.hu/en/OSZKTerkepar/529/>; 3. 'Plan von der Türckischen Graenz-Vestung Nissa, und deren Situation in Königreich Servien wie sich solche in Anfang des Monat Junij Anno 1720 befunden,' Austrian National Library, Vienna (from now on quoted as ÖNB), AB 465(1), <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC03888048>. Radmila Tričković claims that the undated 'Italian Plan', whose original I could not locate, is identical with the plan the spy in Virmonts retinue drew in 1719. Because she does not take into account the fact that this plan is only a rough sketch, she claims that the fortress before 1720 when it was overhauled looked completely different. See Radmila Tričković, 'Urban razvitak Niša u XVIII veku', in *Istorija Niša*, vol. 1, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 244–245.

114 Martha D. Pollak, *Cities at War in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

thesis that the construction of modern polygonal citadels with bastioned walls, which were designed to protect cities from more efficient artillery, also had a lasting effect on civilian architecture, the spatial order of cities in general and on the layout of squares and streets as well as on intra-urban circulation in particular. Likewise, the representation of cities in plans, *vedute* and paintings as well as their self-representation in festivities and monuments changed fundamentally. Taken together, the seventeenth century saw the emergence of a distinct kind of 'military urbanism', which was to have an imprint on city form and urban life until well into the nineteenth century.

This model of military urbanism mainly rests on historical evidence from urban developments in larger European cities such as Turin, Lille and Antwerp, but it also takes into account newly-founded fortress cities, some of which, such as Palmanova in Veneto, Valetta on Malta and Karlstadt (today Karlovac) in Croatia were constructed to act as bulwarks against Ottoman expansion. In the following we will examine the degree to which eighteenth-century Niš can be described through the model of military urbanism or similar typologies of the fortress city.¹¹⁵ On the level of representation the connection between Niš and other fortress cities immediately springs to the eye. Atypically for an Ottoman city, there exist many maps, city plans and *vedute* for Niš, which are rare visual sources regarding urban development. But there is also a direct connection between Ottoman Niš and the development in the rest of Europe. As will be demonstrated in the following, the fortress was the cumulative product of the two contestants in the Ottoman-Habsburg confrontation of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Niš witnessed the transfer of military knowledge and architecture as is shown in the specific form of the bastioned fortress. This makes it an example of a process of transcultural exchanges in border regions, which was mainly driven by war.¹¹⁶

In 1688, after the Austrian army had managed to capture Belgrade, Niš moved to the front line of the war. This started the protracted process of investment in the security architecture of the city, which changed its appearance fundamentally and turned it from the open town of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries into

115 Edith Ennen, 'Die Festungsstadt als Forschungsgegenstand: Die Herausbildung der Festungs- und Garnisonsstadt als Stadttyp', in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der frühneuzeitlichen Garnisons- und Festungsstadt*, ed. Hans-Walter Herrmann and Franz Irsigler (Saarbrücken: Minerva, 1983), 19–35.

116 Thomas Kolnberger, Ilja Steffebauer, Gerald Weigl, eds., *Krieg und Akkulturation* (Wien: Mandelbaum, 2004); also see Florian Riedler, 'Guarding the Imperial Border: The Fortress City of Niš between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, 1690–1740', in *Imperial Cities in the Tsarist, the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires*, ed. by Ulrich Hofmeister and Florian Riedler (London: Routledge, 2023).

a fortified city. The first step was undertaken by the Ottomans. When Belgrade fell, the Ottoman commander of the Hungarian front, Arab Recep Pasha, had Niš fortified with a ring of palisades (şarampo) and a ditch.¹¹⁷ When the enemy approached the city in September 1689, the Ottoman general added an additional fortified line from the river to a hill in the north, blocking the advance to the city. By first circumventing this line and then storming it from behind under their commander Louis of Baden, the Habsburg army was able to defeat the Ottoman defenders and capture their camp and baggage train.¹¹⁸

Subsequently, the Habsburgs turned Niš into the logistical hub for further military operations: from here some detachments advanced south into Kosovo and further towards Skopje, burning down the city; others turned west, occupying Novi Pazar, and then attacked Bosnia; to the north-east, Vidin was conquered. The War Council in Vienna even discussed whether the advance could be continued in the direction of Istanbul; however, lines were considered to be too extended for such a far-flung operation. So, the advance along the Istanbul road beyond Niš stopped at the Dragoman pass, from whence Habsburg detachments conducted raids into the Sofia plain.¹¹⁹

During winter 1689/90 the Ottomans were able to reorganise their defence and in turn started to attack the most outlying Habsburg positions. In this critical situation and with setbacks at other theatres of war, the War Council in Vienna considered giving up all areas south of the Danube. Opposition against such a far-reaching strategic decision came particularly from the commanding general Federico Ambrosio Veterani (1643–95). In charge of reorganising the Habsburg troops in the area, in spring 1690, he decided to make Niš the cornerstone of defence in the upcoming campaign season. Chief engineer Peroni¹²⁰ redesigned the already existing fortifications of Niš, probably the ones that had been built by Arab Recep Pasha. The line was taken back to what Veterani in his campaign account identified as ‘the ruins of the old Roman wall’. Veterani also described in

117 Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmet Ağa, *Nusretname*, ed. İsmet Parmaksızoglu (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1962–63), 2:472, 490. Also see Nazire Karaçay Türkal, ‘Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyl-i Fezleke (1065–22 Ca. 1106/1654–7 Şubat 1695) (Tahlil ve Metin)’ (PhD thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, Istanbul, 2012), 1238, 1251.

118 An Ottoman flag that was captured at Niš is still displayed in the cathedral of Augsburg in Bavaria.

119 Philipp Röder von Diersburg, *Des Markgrafen Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden Feldzüge wider die Türken: Größtentheils nach bis jetzt unbenützten Handschriften* (Karlsruhe: Müller, 1842), 2:108–115.

120 Unfortunately we have no further information on him. Possibly, he was a relative of Giovanni de Galliano Pieroni (1586–1654), a military engineer, architect and astrologer who was friends with Galileo and Kepler and worked for Wallenstein in Prague.

some detail his efforts to organise the necessary tools, material and manpower to build this new fortress. While some material was sent from Belgrade, local peasants were recruited, sometimes by force, to begin the labour.¹²¹

Several sources give us a fairly good impression of Peroni's works. First, there is an inspection report by Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, a gifted military engineer himself, who visited Niš in July 1690 and addressed his observations to the Austrian supreme commander Louis of Baden. In his report, he describes the new fortifications, which consisted mainly of a covered way and a ditch around a bastioned fortress as well as a bridgehead on the southern bank of the river. The report went on to analyse the military value of the defences, indicating some weak points but assuring that they would be very costly for the enemy to overcome. With this, Marsigli reflects the contemporary military doctrine that saw fortifications as a means to manipulate the advance of the enemy and buy time to organise counter-strikes. To underline his positive evaluation, Marsigli closed: 'Because it is so well defended, I would be happy to be assigned to this place, which many consider as just a village.'¹²²

Moreover, numerous drawn and printed plans, which circulated in almost identical versions with only slight variations in colouring and decorative elements, depict this first version of the fortress.¹²³ They show its angled bastions, which in some plans are given the names of famous members of the House of Austria. On all depictions two main gates are visible: one, which was later called Istanbul Gate, opening towards the bridge crossing the Nišava, and the other, Vidin Gate, leading to the north-east. In addition, there were two smaller doors, one leading to the river, the other to the road towards Belgrade, which ran parallel to the western ramparts. The walls of the fortress were surrounded by a ditch and a covered way behind a glacis. South of the river, the plans show the hornwork protecting

121 Federico Veterani, *Feldzüge in Ungarn und den angränzenden Provinzen, vom Jahre 1683 bis 1694* (Dresden: Walter, 1788), 74–76.

122 Marsigli to Louis of Baden, Nissa, 4 July 1690, 'Relation of colonel Count Marsigli dating Nissa 4 July 1690 about the state of the fortress, the bridges across the Danube and the mountain passes.' Quoted from a 19th c. copy in KA, AFA 196, VII/6. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate the original in the General State Archive (Generallandesarchiv) Karlsruhe. Because the report is in German, it is possible that it is a translation of Marsigli's original in Italian, French or Latin, the languages he usually wrote in.

123 Examples of drawings are the two versions in the General State Archive Karlsruhe, which keeps the archive of House Baden: Hausfideikomiss Bd. VIII Nr. 6 and Hfk. G Nr. 129 (rot); a similar coloured drawing is kept in Vienna, KA, AFA 195, XIII/1, and is also reproduced in: Iskra Schwarcz, Stefan Spevak and Ekaterina Večeva: *Hoffnung auf Befreiung: Dokumente aus österreichischen Archiven zur Geschichte Bulgariens* (1687–1690) (Wien: OSTAG, 2004), 414. For the prints see below.

the Nišava bridge, which reveals the main logistical function of the fortress, i.e. to control mobility at this crucial point on the Istanbul–Belgrade road.

On these plans the shape and proportions of the fortress are almost congruent to the satellite images available on Google Maps. This seems to indicate that they relied on a master copy that was produced with a proper survey employing geodetic methods. The plans of 1718–1720 drawn in secret during Driesch's trip are less accurate than the earlier plans. The master copy was probably Peroni's drawing kept in the Vienna War Archive, a clean copy of the plan the engineer used for building the fortress.¹²⁴ Alternatively, the no longer extant drawing (*Riss*) included in Marsigli's report could also have been the master copy for the plans.

While the hand-drawn plans clearly were for the military or representational use of the Habsburg commanders, the engraved and printed versions of the fortress plan reached a larger audience. As a print, the plan of Niš fortress was highly legible for a European public who, for more than a century, consumed prints of fortresses circulating in high numbers. After 1690, Niš was also included in some of the large collections of city and fortress plans.¹²⁵ Some of the prints also had a clearly propagandistic aim to raise awareness and money for the city, which was besieged by the Ottomans in summer 1690 in the course of their counter-offensive along the Istanbul–Belgrade road. One of these prints¹²⁶ was published by the Viennese engraver Johann Martin Lerch, who has been characterised as an 'unofficial propagandist of the court' and had depicted scenes from the war against the Ottomans earlier.¹²⁷ To allude to the ongoing war and its dramatic events, Lerch visualised the Ottoman trenches dug in summer 1690 to cover their

124 'Abriss Von der New Fortification der Stadt NISSA durch den Ingenieur Perony', Vienna, KA, KPS, Kf E36-20. On the process of drafting building plans of fortresses, see Guido v. Büren, 'Der Festungsbau während der Türkenkriege in Ungarn als Teil der "Militärischen Revolution" im Europa der frühen Neuzeit', in *Zwischen den Welten: Kriegsschauplätze des Donauraums im 17. Jahrhundert auf Karten und Plänen*, ed. Volker Rödel (Karlsruhe: Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, 2010), 34–40.

125 E.g. Vincenzo Coronelli, *Citta, fortezze, isole, e porti principali dell'Europa, in planta, et in elevatione*, Nissa Città della Servia, Descritta e dedicata... dal P. Cosmografo Coronelli, Isseppo Rossetti fecit, 1690, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55006110j>; and Johann Georg Maximilian von Fürstenhoff: *Sammlung von Festungsplänen. II. Planes von Italien, Ungarn, Pohlen und denen Nordischen Königreichen...*, 1711, p. 71, see <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/documents/obj/70300002>.

126 Johannes Martin Lerch, 'Wahrer Grundriss der Vestung Nissa in Servien, wie selbige anjetzo fortificiret, vom 14 Augusti an Ao. 1690, durch die Türcken in 80 000 Man starck belägert, und dato durch die Kayerl Waffen Heldenmütig defendiret wird', Vienna [1690], <http://www.deutschefotothek.de/documents/obj/90048376>.

127 Jutta Schumann, *Die andere Sonne: Kaiserbild und Medienstrategien im Zeitalter Leopolds I.* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2003), 222.

advance on the walls of the fortress. This was a common graphic device that had already been used in plans commemorating both sieges of Vienna in 1529 and 1683.¹²⁸ When these trenches reached the outer palisades of the covered way at Niš, Fortress Commander Guido von Starhemberg negotiated a capitulation with the Ottomans. On 9 September 1690 he handed over the fortress to Grand Vizier Köprülüzade Fazıl Mustafa Pasha.¹²⁹

By building a bastioned fortress in Niš, the Habsburg occupiers extended to the city a model that had developed into a centrepiece of their military strategy in Central Europe starting from the middle of the sixteenth century. After the Ottoman siege of 1529, it took about twenty years before the project of modernising the medieval walls of Vienna had finally been approved and financed by the authorities. Subsequently, the program of fortress building was slowly extended, so that from the 1570s onwards small towns and villages in the Habsburg-Ottoman borderland in northern and western Hungary and in Croatia were also fortified. The medieval fortifications of the most important of the over one hundred border posts were turned into bastioned fortresses. Military architects from Italy were the main transmitters to Central and Southeast Europe of the new manner of fortress design, which had been developed in their country in the second half of the fifteenth century and therefore was called *trace italienne*. These fortifications with thick, low-lying walls could withstand the increasing firepower of artillery, which easily shattered medieval city walls; in turn, their angled bastions offered ideal vantage points to lay fire on the besieging army. In their most rigorous form these new features were united in the pentagon shaped citadels that were built in many European cities from the middle of the sixteenth century.¹³⁰

Together with this defence system in Upper Hungary, the art of mapmaking also developed in East-Central Europe. An increasing number of maps were produced to collect and visualise military knowledge for the defence against the Ottomans. Military engineers of Italian, Dutch and German origin who built

128 Pollak, *Cities at War*, 112–118.

129 Veterani, *Feldzüge in Ungarn*, 101; Defterdar Sarı Mehmed, *Zübde-i Vekayiât*, 107–119.

130 Géza Pálffy, 'The Origins and Development of the Border Defence System Against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary (up to the Early Eighteenth Century)', in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 39–49 and id. 'Die Türkenabwehr der Habsburgermonarchie in Ungarn und Kroatien im 16. Jahrhundert: Verteidigungskonzeption, Grenzfestungssystem, Militärkartographie', in *Türkenangst und Festungsbau: Wirklichkeit und Mythos*, ed. Harald Heppner and Zsuzsa Barbarics-Hermanik (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009), 79–108. There is an ongoing historiographical debate about the significance of the modern fortress for the 'military revolution', see Mahinder Kingra, 'The Trace Italienne and the Military Revolution During the Eighty Years War, 1567–1648', *The Journal of Military History* 57, no. 3 (1993): 431–446.

fortresses also drew the plans and arranged them into larger atlases and collections. In addition to practical purposes, these maps often also served as propaganda by visualising the idea of the *antemurale Christianitatis*, the ‘defensive wall of Christianity’, which the House of Austria used to legitimise and finance the war against the Ottomans. On these maps, fortresses figured as the most important symbols of state power.¹³¹

In their defence of the Hungarian borderland, the Ottomans continued to rely on the cheaper, but likewise efficient palisade fortifications called *palanka*. However, being confronted with the modern-style fortresses, they developed very efficient ways to crack these by undermining their walls. This was demonstrated by Ottoman successes in Croatia and Hungary in the Long War (1591–1606) when the Ottomans conquered prominent Austrian fortified cities such as Bihać in Bosnia, Győr (Germ. Raab, Turk. Yanikkale), Eger (Germ. Erlau, Turk. Eğri) and Kanizsa (Germ. Kanischa, Turk. Kanije) in Hungary.¹³² Being well aware of the military value of their acquisitions, the Ottomans showed great care to keep these fortresses in good shape.

When they advanced into Hungary during the wars of the Holy League, the Habsburg troops tried to secure their conquests by building new fortresses. Even in cities that were in their possession for only a short time such as Belgrade and Niš, the modernisation of existing Ottoman fortifications started immediately.

Although building fortresses looked like a straightforward military strategy, it was a much more complicated process in historical reality. Among the many material and social limits to military planning, the immense costs of building, maintaining and constantly modernising these fortresses was the most important. That is why even in strategic places, many fortresses remained unfinished for a long time. Moreover, planners and architects had to take into consideration the inhabitants of fortress towns who were willing only to a certain extent to give up their land for spacious ramparts or to provide financial means and manpower in

¹³¹ Robert Born, ‘The Ottoman Expansion and the Development of Cartography in East-Central Europe (15th–18th Centuries)’, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 54 (2017): 136–140; Palmira Brummett, ‘The Fortress: Defining and Mapping the Ottoman Frontier in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. Andrew C.S. Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 31–55.

¹³² Klára Hegyi, ‘The Ottoman Network of Fortresses in Hungary’, in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 168–169; Mark L. Stein, *Guarding the Frontier: Ottoman Border Forts and Garrisons in Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 36–54; also see Christopher Duffy, *Siege Warfare: The Fortress in the Early Modern World, 1494–1660* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 199–204, 210–219.

the actual building process.¹³³ In the case of Niš, the Ottoman side also had to reckon with such restrictions as we will see below.

Modern fortifications altered the look and character of cities in a significant way. 'The urban citadel, especially in its pure pentagonal form, had an impact comparable to that of the twentieth-century skyscraper.'¹³⁴ Although the new fortifications at Niš were built on a more modest scale, were hastily erected constructions of earth and wood and used already existing fortifications rather than start from scratch with a new design, the effect must have been similar. Eighteenth-century Ottoman historians such as Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa or Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Pasha acknowledged the transformation the city had undergone when the Ottomans re-conquered it in 1690. The latter writes:

After long ditches had been dug on all four sides of the accursed pagan city and strong and solid bastions had been introduced and encircling walls filled with earth had been created and fortified, a strong fortress came into being with palisades entirely around the space of one arrowshot to the outside of the ditch and a covered way and many similar things like buildings and many tunnels, so that it was surpassing the limits of description.¹³⁵

Being aware of their military value, the Ottomans kept the new fortifications, repaired, updated and enlarged them. While this slowly turned the fortress of Niš from a Habsburg into an Ottoman construction, Peroni's original design remains visible today. As early as the campaign season of 1695, Sultan Mustafa II (r. 1695–1703) personally inspected the fortress of the city and ordered it to be overhauled.¹³⁶ It was the nature of early modern fortifications that they were in constant need of repair. In November 1700 the house priest of the Habsburg ambassador, who was on his way back from Istanbul to Vienna, reported that the fortifications of Niš were already in a bad state again.¹³⁷

The next year the Ottoman authorities arranged for a renovation planned as a general redesign of the fortress. This episode offers a good example of the various difficulties the Ottomans faced in appropriating the Habsburg fortress. The

133 Robert Rill, 'Die Festung als Baustelle', in *Türkenangst und Festungsbau: Wirklichkeit und Mythos*, ed. Harald Heppner and Zsuzsa Barbarics-Hermanik (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2009), 143–174.

134 Pollak, *Cities at War*, 11.

135 Defterdar Sarı Mehmed, *Zübde-i Vekayiât*, 371. Very similar in Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmet, *Nusretname*, 2:520.

136 Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmet, *Nusretname*, 1.1:50–51.

137 Niggel, *Reisebeschreibung von Wien nach Konstantinopel*, 157.

chronicler Defterdar Sarı Mehmed gives the following account of the construction measures:

Chief Miner [Lağımçıbaşı] Mehmed came and inspected the place and found out that “the things necessary to construct four bastions [*tabya*] outside the ditch with the exception of lime, stone and bricks, i.e. only carpenters, workers, carts and the like would altogether cost 361,435 *kuruş*”. And when he came there the plan [*resm*] that he had made and showed was approved, because his word was trusted, and on the basis of this plan again his [way of] building was chosen. In the districts of the Rumeli province with his expressed permission together with so many carts and fortress workers and other workers a building official was nominated and agents were sent. However, the said Miner Mehmed was originally a European [Freng], but they had kept this a secret after he had been given permission by the Exalted State to come to the place. So, they began to tear down the old walls of the fortress and dig a wide ditch on the outside and undertook several of these things in this style and with the approaching winter they stopped. According to the design that Mehmed had shown, a shaping [of the ditch] into a long and deep form was necessary. Apart from high costs, it would have meant a total injustice and hard labour to the peasants [*reaya*] of the district. In contrast, should it have been executed in the old design, the necessary money would have been sufficient. Therefore, in the new year it was left in the present [unfinished] state to be set down in a different manner. In one word, the one they called “Miner Mehmed” wickedly destroyed the sultan’s fortress. Therefore, he had to be punished, and with the support of the notables of the state this huge disgrace was erased.¹³⁸

This episode is interesting on several levels. It gives insight into the Ottoman attitude towards the adoption of modern military technology and, at the same time, it offers a glimpse into the financial and political vagaries of fortress construction. The biggest difficulty in building four new bastions – it seems that these were planned as outlying ravelins as they were finally executed in the nineteenth century – and a wider ditch or possibly a second ditch were the incurred costs. As another reason why the project could not be finished in the short run, the chronicle seems to suggest that there were protests by the peasants who were conscripted as forced labour.

138 Defterdar Sarı Mehmed, *Zübde-i Vekayiât*, 726–727.

As if these difficulties were not enough, in his narrative Sarı Mehmed connects them to the identity of Miner Mehmed and his alleged sabotage as the ultimate explanation for the failure of the project. In a report, the Habsburg ambassador Michael Talmann claims that Mehmed was a French renegade.¹³⁹ In contrast, the archival documentation of the renovation of Niš fortress in 1702 as studied in detail by Radmila Tričković refers to Miner Mehmed and his brother Mustafa from Sofia as the appointed contractors but is silent about all of the other details given in the chronicle.¹⁴⁰

Even if we will never be able to learn more about the real identity of the Miner Mehmed for the lack of sources, the sabotage story – whether true or not – tells something about the atmosphere of fear and mistrust among the Ottoman elite. We will come back to this in the next section. Moreover, the story seemed believable to the contemporaries because the renegade military advisor was a known figure in the Ottoman context.¹⁴¹ In the same manner as gunpowder technology, new trends in fortification design were spread by European military architects in Ottoman employment. In the new geopolitical context after Karlowitz, both Ottomans and Habsburgs made efforts to secure their borders with new fortresses. In the Danube-Sava area, the Habsburg defence system hinged on Petrovaradin (Germ. Peterwardein), while the Ottomans fortified Belgrade and Timișoara until both were lost in 1718.

Belgrade offers a particularly vivid example of the transfer of fortress design, its actors and means of transmission. One of the experts involved was a certain Andrea Cornaro, an Italian or Levantine engineer, who had been among the Venetian defenders of Candia (today Iraklion) on Crete when the Ottomans besieged the city intermittently from 1647 to 1669. Subsequently, Cornaro moved to Habsburg service and started to modernise the fortifications of Belgrade after 1688. In 1690, when the Ottomans retook the city, he switched sides – it is debated whether voluntarily or because he was captured and forced by the Ottomans – continued to work on the fortress and ultimately realised a design in the style of Vauban (1633–1707), chief-military architect of Louis XIV. Most importantly, Cornaro also trained several Greeks and Armenians in the art of modern fortress design. After his death

139 Ömer Gezer, 'Pasarofça Antlaşması'ndan Sonra Habsburg Sınırında Osmanlı Askerî Gücü: Niş Kalesi ve Garnizonu Örneği,' in *Harp ve Sulh: 300. Yılında Pasarofça Antlaşması Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, ed. Gültekin Yıldız (Istanbul: Milli Savunma Üniversitesi, 2019), 175.

140 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 243–244.

141 Rhoads Murphey, 'The Ottoman Attitude towards the Adoption of Western Technology: The Role of the Efrenci Technicians in Civil and Military Applications', in *Contributions à l'histoire économique et sociale de l'Empire ottoman*, edited by Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 287–298.

in 1701, a convert named Ahmed Abdullah from the Royal Corps of Armourers (Dergah-i Ali Cebeciler) became the chief architect of the Belgrade fortress.¹⁴²

We lack any specific information about converts such as Ahmed Abdullah, Miner Mehmed or an unknown German engineer, who reputedly helped to modernise the fortress in Niš in 1718.¹⁴³ Likewise, the Muslim military architects that worked alongside them remain largely unknown. However, it is clear that the theatre of war at the Danube with the emerging border zone offered fertile ground for the transmission of military knowledge.

After the disaster of 1701/02, the Ottoman government undertook the next effort to modernise the defence of Niš in 1716, when a new war with Austria was looming. This time a military architect from Istanbul who stuck to the original design was in charge. In light of previous bad experiences, much care was taken to arrange for the necessary labour and material. 500 workers as well as 210 construction specialists were recruited from neighbouring districts. According to the official documentation, 33,000 trees were felled to be used as palisades in the construction. In the short Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1716–18, Niš was not attacked, but it proved a vital base for the Ottoman army as a node in the supply network.¹⁴⁴

It seems that immediately after peace was concluded and the new border with the Habsburg Monarchy was fixed in Central Serbia, a new and even bigger overhaul of the fortress was planned. The imperial decree that sanctioned the project is dated February 1719. To make the fortress fit for its exposed position at the border, 390,000 *kuruş* and three years for the completion of the works were calculated. When Driesch came through Niš in June 1720 on his way back from Istanbul, works were in full swing. He claims that 16,000 *sipahis* ordered to work on the fortress were crowding the city. Like other large building projects, this was also fraught with difficulties and delays: the *sipahis* complained about the workload and the governor of Niš was accused of embezzling funds and mistreating the local peasants. The main works were completed in 1723, but for the rest of the decade, construction and maintenance activities continued each summer.¹⁴⁵

142 Ömer Gezer, 'Kale ve Nefer: Habsburg Sınırında Osmanlı Askerî Gücünün Yeniden Örgütlenmesi (1699–1715)' (Phd thesis, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2016), 116–122; Luigi Fernando Marsigli, *Stato Militare Dell'Imperio Ottomanno, L'état Militaire de l'Empire Ottoman*, vol. 2 (The Hague: Gosse, 1732), 150; more information on Cornaro and two other captured Habsburg engineers is provided in Radmila Tričković, *Beogradski Pašaluk, 1687–1739* (Belgrade: Službeni Glasnik, 2003), 88–93.

143 Öbschelwiz claimed this in one report, see L. Matuschka, *Feldzüge des Prinzen Eugen*, vol. 17 (II,8): *Der Türken-Krieg 1716–18* (Vienna: Verlag des k. und k. Generalstabes, 1891), 294.

144 Bekir Gökpinar, 'Niş Kalesi'nin Yeniden İnşaatı ve Avusturya Seferlerindeki Rolü (1716–1717)', *History Studies* 11, no. 1 (2019): 107–128.

145 Tričković, 'Urban razvítak', 247–249; Driesch, *Historische Nachricht*, 467.

Many elements of the fortress that were planned and constructed at the beginning of the 1720s are still visible today. Among the architectural showpieces were four new gate houses of which two, the Belgrad Gate opening east towards the Belgrade road as well as the Istanbul Gate directly opposite the bridge, are still extant today. Both were designed as decorated stone gateways marking the entrance to the administrative hub in the southern part of the fortress near the river. In this area, a number of official buildings were newly erected, among them the palace (*konak*) of the governor, an armoury (*cebebane*) as well as a number of barracks and stores.¹⁴⁶ As another highly visible feature, all formerly earthen walls of the fortress as well as the inner walls of the ditch were now clad in stone and brick, giving an impression of durability to the ensemble.

These measures are proof of the Ottoman state's symbolic investment in the city, which had become a border city in 1718 and thus the entry point to Ottoman territory. Especially the gates had a parallel function to those in European Baroque fortresses where they were a very common architectural feature displaying state power. But of course, the Ottomans looked to their own architectural traditions, e.g. the gates of Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. The purely military-logistical function of Niš Fortress was augmented with a theatrical function to display Ottoman sovereignty. It is telling that for those coming from the north, the most convenient entry to the fortress, the Belgrad Gate, was upgraded from a simple door in the wall to a carefully decorated stone gate.

The long inscription above the Istanbul Gate also betrays the new imperial significance of the city.¹⁴⁷ It celebrates the completion of the fortress and Sultan Ahmed III, who commissioned the works. According to the contemporary panegyric style and in a heavily Persianised language, the sultan is praised for his building activities, but he is also styled as a successful conqueror and peacemaker. He is likened to ideal rulers such as Alexander the Great who, in the Islamic tradition, built a wall in the Caucasus to protect the civilised world from the wild people of Gog and Magog.¹⁴⁸ According to the inscription, the fortress of Niš also put an iron barrier in the way of the enemy in this manner. The fortress is praised for its strength and likened to those on Rhodes and Candia on Crete. This shows the geopolitical frame of reference in which the war of 1716–18 took place. It had started on the

¹⁴⁶ Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 252.

¹⁴⁷ To my knowledge there is no modern edition of the inscription, which is difficult to read because of the language and its state of preservation. The nineteenth-century Serbian translation seems to be on the whole correct as compared to the parts of the original I was able to decipher. See, Milan Đ. Miličević, *Kraljevina Srbija: Novi krajevi* (Belgrade: Kr.-Srp. državne štamparije, 1884), 94.

¹⁴⁸ Iago Gocheleishvili, 'Caucasus, pre-1500', *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*, online ed., 2014.

Mediterranean frontier in 1715 with the successful Ottoman attack on the Morea, which had been held by Venice since 1699. Only when the Habsburgs entered the war on the side of their Venetian allies did fortune turn against the Ottomans.

Despite this huge investment into the security of the border at the beginning of the 1720s, Niš was occupied a second time by the Habsburg army in 1737. Ironically, the strength of the fortress was not tested, but when the enemy army approached the city, its Ottoman governor surrendered on favourable terms. The Ottoman garrison as well as the Muslim population, altogether about 20,000 men, women and children, were allowed to leave the city freely. The Ottoman garrison could keep their weapons except the heavy artillery; civilians could take with them their movable property, which was transported from the city in carts provided by the Habsburg army. According to the capitulation agreement, Christian slaves to be found in the city, mostly captives from the Russian theatre of the same war, were to be freed. A couple of months later, the Habsburg fortress commander accepted similar terms when he had to face the Ottoman main army.¹⁴⁹

Unlike in 1689/90, it seems that this time the Habsburg occupation did not transform Niš in any material way, though on the field of representation, the city became ever more integrated into the European circulation of prints city plans. The plans produced on the spot by the occupying army had a straightforward military purpose. For example, a hand drawn plan entitled *Plan de Nissa*,¹⁵⁰ which seems to have relied on a proper triangulation, served as an instrument of military planning and proposed ways in which to strengthen and enlarge the fortress by sketching newly planned fortifications over the existing ones. Apart from a number of outlying ravelins, most ambitious was the project to build a new bridge with a new bridgehead on the left bank of the Nišava a few hundred meters to the east of the old and apparently dilapidated one. Such a new bridgehead would have constituted a considerable intrusion into the urban fabric because it would have erased a whole city quarter.

As to the ramparts and gates and all other buildings relevant from a military point of view, the *Plan de Nissa* resembles the plans of 1690 in giving an exact representation similar to today's aerial view (see fig. 3.3). In addition, the 1737 plan also reveals more details of the conquered city itself like the maps drawn

149 Louis-Félix Guynement de Keralio, *Histoire de la guerre des Russes et des Impériaux contre les Turcs* (Paris: Debure, 1780), 1:183–185; Moriz v. Angeli, 'Der Krieg mit der Pforte 1736 bis 1739', *Mittheilungen des k. k. Kriegs-Archivs* 1881: 293–294.

150 'Plan de Nissa', ÖNB, FKB AA 28.1, see <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC04571927>. There is also a smaller version with only the fortress: 'Plan und Project von Nissa', KA, KPSKPS/Kif, E34. The military engineers also produced some beautiful cuts through the ramparts: 'Profils der Vestung Nissa', ÖNB, FKB N.24.

between 1718 and 1720 had done, but in a less schematic way. Inside the fortress, the space between the narrow and curving streets is filled with red blocks indicating a densely built-up area. Clearly, Niš was not a fortress city planned from scratch where the housing for the garrison or a civilian population was also arranged according to an orthogonal grid. Rather, it resembled the example of many European cities where a Medieval core was protected with new-style fortifications. But while there are many examples of how new fortifications inspired changes of the urban form on the inside,¹⁵¹ this does not seem to be the case in Niš. The typical design features of military urbanism such as straight and wide streets connecting the gates or geometric squares were missing. As the most important buildings, the plan shows the location of five mosques. One free standing structure in the north-eastern part of the fortress is identifiable as Hünkar Mosque. The previous chapter has already hinted at the importance of mosques for defining urban territory in the Ottoman context; we will return to this issue again later in this chapter.

In contrast to the fortress, the city beyond the river seemed to have been less densely populated so that the map displays single houses aligned along the streets. While it is unlikely that the plan has the quality of a cadastre map, we can assume that it gives a rightful impression about the density and course of the principal streets. In the description of the 1719 map by Öbschelwiz, the left-bank city was designated as consisting of ‘mostly new houses and, towards the line of palisades, of many gardens and fences, where still new houses are being built, especially by those expelled from Serbia’.¹⁵² It seems that the left-bank city had kept its character, which was different from the densely populated, built-up fortress area. Moreover, the basic form of a radial street grid remained visible there, connecting the dilapidated bridgehead with the gates in the perimeter wall. Yet the obsession with order as expressed by rectilinear streets, geometrical squares etc., which characterised many new city quarters in European cities, is missing. In the part of Niš south of the river, the requirements of intra-urban circulation were expressed in a more organic way.

Upon the conquest by the Habsburg army, a number of engravings of Niš were published in addition to these hand-drawn plans. They were produced for a broader public for information and propaganda purposes. The most elaborate of these combines a graphic depiction of the surrender with an ichnographic plan of the city. It takes up a popular genre of siege images and surrenders that defined

151 Pollak, *Cities at War*, 178–195.

152 ‘Plan von der türck. Gräntz Festung Nissa im Königreich Servien. Wie sich solche im Junio 1719 befunden...’, National Széchényi Library, Budapest, TK 533, <https://maps.hungaricana.hu/en/OSZKTerkeptar/529/>, page 2, M.

the images of cities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most famously Velazques' *Surrender of Breda*.¹⁵³ In the case of Niš, the moment of surrender is depicted with four men on their knees in wide and flowing garments presenting the keys of the city to a group of men in European military dress who appear from a tent.¹⁵⁴ In the background, we can see troops moving towards a stylised city with bastioned ramparts and a skyline defined by a massive tower as well as numerous steeples or minarets.

While this view probably has little correspondence to reality, the ichnographic plan on the right side shows the familiar shape of the bastioned fortress of Niš as we know it from previous plans. The interior of the fortress is kept largely blank except for an unusually straight street connecting the Vidin Gate with the Istanbul Gate. It seems that the engraver was so inspired by the genre that he invented a military street where the hand-drawn plan we have discussed above showed a maze of smaller crooked alleys. However, in the case of the left-bank city, both the hand-drawn as well as the engraved plans correspondingly depict the radial street grid. Additionally, the engraved plan also shows extended suburbs, which had grown to the south along the main traffic arteries towards Sofia.¹⁵⁵

In summary, Niš became a city in a new border area in the first half of the eighteenth century. This new geo-political location triggered the design and construction of the fortress, henceforth the main architectural feature of the city. It was built in several stages as a collaborative, or rather competitive, effort of Habsburgs and Ottomans in their struggle over possession of the city. While in 1690 the Habsburg military engineers defined the form of the fortress, subsequently it was integrated by the Ottomans' housing the administrative and military hub and also a civilian residential population. After 1739, when the borders remained fixed,

153 Pollak, *Cities at War*, 109–153.

154 Keralio, *Histoire de la guerre des Russes*, I: 184 and Constantine Dapontes, *Éphémérides Daces ou chronique de la guerre de quatre ans, 1736–1739* (Paris, 1881), II: 400, include a similar scene, which might mean that the depiction is perhaps not entirely fictitious.

155 'Plan von der Türckischen Gräntz-Vestung Nissa, im Königreich Servien wie solche den 28. Julii A. 1737. an die Kayserlichen übergeben worden', 1737, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Library, Hanover, Mappe XXXII, B, 2, <http://digitale-sammlungen.gwlb.de/resolve?PPN=10064631X>. The plan seems to rely on a undated, plainer version by G. Bodenehr: 'Plan von der Türckischen Graenz-Vestung Nissa, und deren Situation im Königreich Servien', Augsburg, State Library Berlin, Kart. X 47145. There is also a ground level city view 'Prospect der Türkischen Granz Vestung Nissa so den 25. Iullij der Kaiserl. Armee mit Accord ist über geben worden samt allen Zeug-Häusern, Proviant, Stuck Mörser, Pulfer, Bley, Kugel, Bomben und Granaden.' in: Moll's Map Collection, http://mapy.mzk.cz/en/mzk03/001/052/822/2619316666_02/. This view shows a ring of palisades and the stone-clad walls, but irritatingly no bastions except for an Ottoman-looking gate tower. The city itself, probably its northern part, is characterised by several minarets and nondescript houses.

there were only a few minor alterations to the military architecture. Plans of the city that were drawn in the 1780s, when the last Habsburg-Ottoman war was at hand, basically show fortress and city in the same way as before.¹⁵⁶

While the military plans presented above focused on the fortress, they also show the extension of the urban territory to the south of the river. This part developed in several stages into the dominant and most dynamic part of the city; among other things, it became the site of the cohabitation of Muslim and Christian inhabitants as the next section will show.

3.3 Fortress Mentality vs. Reconstruction

The Habsburg-Ottoman imperial confrontation of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century affected Niš in a profound way that went beyond its architecture. On an urban level, it stirred up the existing order of urban space, created new internal boundaries and altered the collective psychology, cultural norms and the legal framework of coexistence of different urban groups. These transformations were embedded in an alternating pattern of confrontation and reconciliation between the Ottoman state, local elites and different groups of the population. This section will examine various instances of internal confrontation and will juxtapose them to efforts to reconstruct a common urban life. For that purpose, it is convenient to return once again to Driesch's account of his 1719 visit to Niš.

When Driesch, together with the Habsburg embassy, reached Niš, they were welcomed by a procession of urban notables and the district militia of *sipahis*, who treated them with courtesies and gifts. They were personally received by Muhsinzade Abdullah Pasha, the city commander and governor of Rumelia whose patron was Grand Vizier Damad Ibrahim, the main proponent of peace with the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁵⁷ In contrast to these officials, the local janissaries were less welcoming towards the Habsburg delegation encamped near the city. Even without the translators who enabled communication on the higher levels, the simple soldiers in the Habsburg retinue apparently understood the janissaries' hostile looks and curses, which Driesch renders as 'Anasen siktım Jaours'.¹⁵⁸ A Venetian prisoner of war and slave who was handed over to the ambassador further explained the local garrison's hostile attitude. According to the Venetian,

156 'Plan von Nis, Oberst Lieut. Turatj von do. 1783', in: AT-OeStA/KA KPS LB K I f, 37 E; 'Erklärung der Zeichen verschiedener Gegenstände von der Festung Nissa (1783)', in: AT-OeStA/KA KPS LB K I f, 38 E. This is a rather schematic map with some inaccuracies. It indicates the existence of the clock-tower in the upper city.

157 M. Münir Aktepe, *Patrona İsyası (1730)* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1958), 116.

158 Driesch, *Historische Nachricht*, 68.

there had been several acts of insubordination and attempts of mutiny in recent times, which the Agha of the Janissaries of the city, his former master, had had a hard time suppressing. One reason for this behaviour, which the Venetian claimed was especially typical for Niš, was the janissaries' rejection of the recent peace treaty.¹⁵⁹

At the time of Driesch's visit the janissary garrison had grown to become a large part of the population of the city. Before the war of 1716–18 there had only been a little more than 200 soldiers registered in Niš,¹⁶⁰ but the numbers rose dramatically to 15,000 men, among them 6,650 Imperial troops (3,600 janissaries plus other units) during the war. Because of its role as the principal border fortress, the size of the permanent janissary garrison remained relatively large in the following decade, at least on paper: in 1727/28 there were 800 janissaries stationed in Niš who were supported by ca. 2,000 locally recruited soldiers (*yerli*).¹⁶¹

It is very likely that this garrison slowly merged with the local city population as was very common in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ottoman cities. On the one hand, soldiers started to pursue civilian professions because they had to earn a living at times of irregular pay; on the other hand, urban craftsmen or merchants enrolled as janissaries to profit from the protection the corps offered to its members. We are best informed about this process in the Ottoman capital, where it already started in the late sixteenth century, but it also happened in smaller cities. For example, in Candia on Crete, conquered by the Ottomans from the Venetians in 1669, within two decades most of the Muslim inhabitants formally belonged to the military, among them many new converts for whom this was a means of upward social mobility.¹⁶²

The existence of a large group of paid soldiers who were not fully able or willing to fight in a war was not only a military problem. These half military, half civilian men became an important factor in urban politics; they could be mobilised against the central government, which was particularly dangerous in the capital. The next chapter will deal in greater detail with the janissaries' near-independent rule over the city and province of Belgrade around the turn of the eighteenth century, which also had a decisive impact on Niš.

159 Ibid., 69–71.

160 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 245–246.

161 Ömer Gezer, 'Pasarofça Antlaşması'ndan Sonra Habsburg Sınırında Osmanlı Askerî Gücü: Niş Kalesi ve Garnizonu Örneği', in *Harp ve Sulh: 300. Yılında Pasarofça Antlaşması Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, ed. Gültekin Yıldız (Istanbul: Milli Savunma Üniversitesi, 2019), 180–181; Tričković, 'Niš u XVIII veku', 214 mentions 2,221 yerlis and 5820 Imperial troops (5,200 janissaries plus others) in 1719.

162 Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 87–93.

How quickly the janissaries of Niš became localised and what role they played in the urban life of Niš in the first half of the eighteenth century is not so easy to grasp. It seems that those described by Driesch were still real soldiers on active duty; their hostility towards the foreigner reflected their experience in the recent war. The Ottomans as well as the Habsburgs styled their imperial war as a religious conflict between Islam and Christendom and conducted it with a brutality that left little room for compromise. Soldiers and civilians on both sides were killed or enslaved and had to leave their homes. Consequently, a large number of captured Habsburg soldiers were living in the Ottoman border cities as slaves. One important task for all Habsburg diplomatic missions was to free as many of the Christian captives as possible by buying them back from their Ottoman owners. Similar to Driesch, Philipp Franz Gudenus, a participant of the Great Embassy of 1740–41, also attests to such a practice of freeing Christian slaves when the embassy was passing through Belgrade, Niš, Sofia, Plovdiv and Edirne.¹⁶³ There were also quite a few Ottoman soldiers who were kept as slaves in Austria and Germany. In Niš, Driesch encountered one of them, who had served for five years as a ‘Sclav’ of the equerry of the court in Vienna before he was released.¹⁶⁴

The religious confrontation between the two sides and the feeling of hostility caused by constant warfare also had consequences for the civilian population in Ottoman Europe. Especially in the precarious border areas, civilians could not remain innocent bystanders but rather were regularly caught in the military confrontation. Using the religious justification for the war, Habsburg politicians and generals tried to encourage the Christian population of the conquered territory to rise against the sultan. In north-western Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo and north-eastern Macedonia, i.e. in areas that Habsburg detachments entered in 1689/90, they tried to win allies among the local Slavic and Albanian Christians. Locally, Habsburg propaganda was successful and there were revolts against Ottoman rule, and volunteers offered their military assistance to the Habsburg armies. But despite the propaganda value of these acts of revolt, the Habsburg officers on the ground always mistrusted these irregulars whose military value they doubted.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Fritsch, *Paschas und Pest*, 61–73.

¹⁶⁴ Driesch, *Historische Nachricht*, 71; for other examples of Muslim slaves see Osman Ağa, *Die Autobiographie des Dolmetschers 'Osmān Ağa aus Temeschwar: Der Text der Londoner Autographen in normalisierter Rechtschreibung*, transl. Richard Franz Kreutel (London: Luzac, 1980); Markus Krischer, *Der Mann aus Babadag: Wie ein türkischer Janitschar 1683 nach München verschleppt und dort fürstlicher Sänftenträger wurde* (Darmstadt: Theiss, 2014).

¹⁶⁵ Ivan Pärvev, *Habsburgs and Ottomans between Vienna and Belgrade (1683–1739)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 75–115.

Those local Christians who were not actively involved were also affected by Habsburg conquest and Ottoman re-conquest. Much of the Ottoman ability to strike back was due to a reorganisation of the army, but reinforcements by the Crimean Tatars and local contingents of Muslim Albanians also played a considerable role. Tatars especially were given free rein to plunder and enslave the Christian peasant population in the process of re-conquest in Macedonia and Kosovo. This way of waging the war resulted in tens of thousands of refugees. It may not have been official Ottoman policy, but it is reasonable to conclude that there was suspicion towards the non-Muslim population and a certain wish for revenge.¹⁶⁶

Ottoman chroniclers such as Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa vividly express this attitude. His account of the war highlights the Habsburg efforts to incite Ottoman Christians and acts of their disloyal behaviour. He contrasts this to stories of the Muslim population's distress. In a long list, the author enumerates 35 cities, towns and strongholds that were conquered by the enemy. In these places Muslim property was open to plunder and unless they did not want to be killed or enslaved, Muslims had to leave their homes. Some of them fled as far as Istanbul and Anatolia.¹⁶⁷ According to the chronicle, Niš was affected in a similar manner. When the Habsburg army approached the city, all Muslim women and children as well as the elderly were evacuated with their belongings to Skopje, Sofia or towards the Danube. When the city fell, the rest of the Muslim population was captured or fled in panic to the mountains without being able to save anything but their lives.¹⁶⁸

The hardening of the ideological fronts became especially apparent when the Ottomans started their counter-offensive in 1690 and re-conquered the territory south of the Danube and Sava. Christian rebels who had taken up arms against the sultan could not expect mercy. In contrast to regular Habsburg soldiers who in most cases could safely retreat together with some of their arms and supplies should they be willing to surrender the city, town or fortress they held, local fighters were executed even when they surrendered. The Habsburg commander of Niš handed over 150 Muslim prisoners of war, 399 local Christians (*reaya*), including some fighters (*haydut*), and one hundred 'infidel' deserters (*mürted olan levend-i bidinler*) when they abandoned the fortress to the Ottomans. The deserters were put in chains and were the first to work on the renovation of the fortress. The chronicler does not explicitly state what happened to the Christian fighters, but it

166 Tatjana Katić, 'Viyana Savaşından Sonra Sırbistan, 1683–1699', in *Türkler*, ed. Hasan Güzel (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002), 9:766–767.

167 Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmet, *Nusretname*, 2:490–492.

168 Ibid., 2:472–474.

is probable that they were executed as had been the case before when other cities were re-conquered.¹⁶⁹

However, because revenge offered no long-term rebuilding strategy, the Ottoman government soon adopted an alternative set of policies as an attempt to pre-empt acts of Christian disloyalty and insurrection. A tax reform initiated by Grand Vizier Köprülüzade Fazıl Mustafa Pasha abolished some of the extraordinary levies that had become a regular means of financing the wars of the seventeenth century. The Christian peasants, as the main contributors, would only be burdened with those taxes prescribed by the sharia, most importantly the *cizye* (poll tax). It was to be levied in three tiers according to the financial capabilities of the taxpayers. Moreover, as part of the reform building new churches and renovating existing ones was to become much easier. These measures were to make the sultan's rule attractive again to his Christian subjects.¹⁷⁰

The more the Ottoman counter-offensive proved successful during summer 1690 and the regular Ottoman forces predominated, the more this conciliatory policy replaced actions of plunder and revenge. Soon, the Ottoman government proclaimed a general amnesty for all inhabitants of the re-conquered territories and promised to protect them from further violence; Christian refugees were encouraged with tax exemptions to return to the Ottoman side.¹⁷¹

We have only limited information on how urban life in Niš was re-established under Ottoman rule in the decades after 1690. Especially the number of Christians who returned to the city is uncertain. According to one researcher, a Jewish community settled in the city in 1695 and founded a synagogue.¹⁷² However, we only get a clearer picture about this community in the next phase of the city's development after 1718.

In general, the city had been hit hard by the war and had lost much of its population. Even after twenty years, a traveller from France passing through still witnessed many ruins.¹⁷³ Also, the Muslim population of the towns and cities re-conquered from the Habsburgs after 1690 were slow to return. Only the rich were able to repair their houses and re-start their businesses. They had a bigger

169 Ibid., 2:518–519.

170 Fehmi Yılmaz, 'The Life of Köprülüzade Fazıl Mustafa Pasha and his Reforms (1637–1691)', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 20 (2000): 202–208.

171 Katić, 'Viyana Savaşından Sonra Sırbistan', 767–768.

172 Ženi Lebl, *Do "Konačnog Rešenja": Jevreji u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2002), 69.

173 Aubry de La Mottraye, *Voyages du Sr A. de La Mottraye en Europe, Asie et Afrique* (The Hague: Johnson & Van Duren, 1727), 2:159.

incentive than poor refugees because unless they returned within a certain time, their property was to fall to the state.¹⁷⁴

The economic difficulties the city faced in the first half of the eighteenth century are directly addressed by a register drawn up by the *defterdar* (financial official) of Niš after 1718 (1131 AH).¹⁷⁵ The register lists abandoned urban properties such as shops, houses and land, which had been confiscated by the state and rented out again. Possibly, the landowners, shopkeepers or craftsmen had either been killed or had fled the city and for unknown reasons had not yet returned. The 98 abandoned properties, mostly shops, were distributed all over the city, which the list for this special purpose did not divide into quarters but rather into four larger urban areas. Approximately 30 per cent of the listed properties were located inside the fortress, which was not only a military area, but formed an integral part of the city with a population of civilian inhabitants. From the descriptions locating the properties, which, in a way, substituted for a missing cadastre, we learn that apart from barracks and powder magazines, the fortress also had a clock tower (*saat*). In Ottoman Europe, local donors had made this a widespread feature of urbanity. Early examples of Ottoman clock towers were built in 1566 in Skopje, in 1578 in Banja Luka in Bosnia and in Jagodina on the road to Belgrade.¹⁷⁶ The one in Niš had been installed by the Habsburg army, at least that is what the Habsburg ambassador's house priest claimed when he passed through the city in 1700. He notes that he 'heard with particular enjoyment the chimes of a German clock, which had remained when this place was left [by the Habsburg army] in the year 1690.'¹⁷⁷

An earlier document, a population survey undertaken by the *kadı* in 1710,¹⁷⁸ gives further clues as to the development of the population of Niš in the first decade after the Karlowitz peace treaty. Moreover, the survey reveals some of the administrative and social territories, which are not visible on the maps examined above. In 1710, 484 households altogether were registered in Niš, of whom about 80 per cent were Muslim, grouped in eight separate quarters. In this survey the fortress garrison of 226 soldiers (*yerli, yeniçeri*) were included. Against this number, the civilian population of around 250 shrinks to a size that had been typical

174 Katić, 'Viyana Savaşından Sonra Sırbistan', 768.

175 MAD.d.. 7065, not dated.

176 Klaus Kreiser, 'Ottoman Clock Towers: A Preliminary Survey and Some General Remarks on Construction Dates, Sponsors, Locations and Functions', in *Essays in Honour of Ekmeleddin İhsanoglu*, ed. Mustafa Kaçar (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2006), 1:545.

177 Niggel, *Reisebeschreibung von Wien nach Konstantinopel*, 157.

178 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 245–247. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate the original document in the Ottoman archive.

for Niš in the sixteenth century. However, the fact that these soldiers lived in all parts of the city might indicate that there was really no strict boundary between civilians and military. Unfortunately, the population survey does not mention whether these soldiers had civilian professions as well. So, it is hard to say in which way they belonged to the city population.

Much of the Muslim population lived within the precinct of the fortress where 206 households were distributed on six quarters. The three largest of them centred on Hünkâr Mosque, the Bazaar Mosque (Çarşı Camii), probably located at the southern tip of the fortress in the market area, and Edirneli Bali Mosque. Beyond the river there were two large Muslim quarters with 165 households altogether. The bigger one was located immediately south of the bridgehead; the second Muslim quarter on the left bank was located to the west, on the road to Prokuplje (Ott. Ürgüb), a town 30 kilometres to the west of Niš.

In addition to the Muslims, 109 Christian households were registered under the rubric *varoş* and eleven additional Christian households were registered as living in the Muslim quarters. Overall, the Christian urban population had increased dramatically as compared to a census undertaken in 1684 when only 15 Christian households were registered in Niš. Through the time of war and occupation, the city seems to have offered more protection than the countryside, where the population on average decreased by 50 per cent.¹⁷⁹

This increase in the number of Christians introduces the issue of communal boundaries, i.e. the question of whether and how communal differences of the city population were translated into urban space. The term *varoş* under which the majority of the Christian inhabitants were recorded partly answers this question. In a most general understanding, *varoş* signified a part of a city as different from its citadel. In this sense, many official documents, as e.g. the list of abandoned properties presented above, speak of *kale* and *varoş* to indicate the two different parts of Niš, i.e. the fortress and the left-bank city. In a narrower sense, the term is closely associated with the Christian inhabitants of Ottoman Balkan cities. It could be employed as a toponym denoting the usually intramural parts of a city where Christians lived.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, *varoş* frequently was also used as a collective term for all Christian inhabitants of a given city without any spatial reference. In this sense, *varoş* (also called *politeia* in Greek, *opština* in Serbian, *obshtina* in Bulgarian) could describe a veritable municipal organisation, usually working through the

179 Radmila Tričković, 'Niš u XVIII veku', in *Istorija Niša*, vol. 1, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 210.

180 Svetlana Ivanova, 'Varoş: The Elites of the Reaya in the Towns of Rumeli, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries', in *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. A. Anastasopoulos (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 2005), 203–206.

episcopal council. It collected certain taxes (while others were still paid at the level of the quarter), organised welfare, religious life and education.¹⁸¹

It seems that the population survey of 1710 employed the term *varoş* in a double sense. While the fact that the Christians had a different tax status in comparison to their Muslim neighbours explains their separation in the register, at the same time, it is not unlikely that the Christians also settled in a separate part of Niš, more precisely south of the principal west-east road from Ürgüb to Istanbul.¹⁸²

For the period after 1718 we are better informed about the urban development of Niš, particularly of the left bank city. While the fortress was overhauled and made the administrative centre of the border region, the left bank city, which was enclosed with a ring of palisades, also witnessed considerable growth and slowly surpassed the fortress in size and economic importance. This urban expansion was due to the new importance of Niš as a border city, not only in a military sense, but also for trade. For this period, a proper census is lacking, but urban growth can be reconstructed with the help of the documentation concerning the mosques and their foundations, which were important institutions of urban expansion. Much like mosques, churches can also serve as indicators of the political and social position of the Christian community of Niš.

The construction of the Paşa Mosque as the biggest mosque of Niš proved to be one of the most important instruments of urban development because it structured urban space in a lasting way. It was named after its founder, Topal Osman Pasha (d. 1733/34), who in different phases of his career was commander of Niš, governor of Rumelia and also grand vizier. According to the foundation charter of 1728,¹⁸³ the mosque together with a medrese was re-built in place of an older mosque close to the bridgehead (*varoş kalesi*) in the neighbourhood of Taşköprü. It was staffed with two imams and two muezzins and had a library with 69 books. To the assets of Topal Osman's foundation, which financed the mosque, belonged over one hundred shops, many of them newly built and located inside the fortress as well as in the mosque's immediate vicinity. These latter shops successively developed into the new central bazaar of the city that later was covered with a roof of wooden planks and became a 'covered market' (in Turkish *kapalı çarşı* or in South Slavic *pokrivena čaršija*) similar to many Ottoman cities.

Another important asset of the foundation from an urbanistic viewpoint was a *yahudihane* with 31 rooms, i.e. a large courtyard house with rooms for poorer

181 Ibid., 206–216.

182 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 256.

183 Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimârî Eserleri*, vol. 3/3: *Yugoslavya*, (Istanbul: Bilmen, 1981): 131–132; Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 257.

Jewish families.¹⁸⁴ This complex must have been located immediately to the west of the hornwork at the bridge, where in the nineteenth century the Jewish community still clustered around their synagogue located on land that belonged to Topal Osman's foundation.¹⁸⁵ It is unknown whether this was the same location of the first Jewish synagogue founded in 1695.

Paşa Mosque was located at the crossroads of the main axis of development of the left-bank city. To the west a road led in the direction of the Ürgüb or Leskofça Gate as it was also called, referring to the town of Leskovac in the Morava valley 50 kilometres south of Niš. In 1719 a *mesjid* in this area was upgraded to a mosque, which in the nineteenth century generally was known as Defterdar Mosque.¹⁸⁶ To the east of the crossroads the main road axis led to the Istanbul Gate – not to be confused with the main gate of the fortress, which bore the same name – referred to this way because from here the road continued in the direction of Sofia and Istanbul. In 1718 the people of Niš sent a petition to Istanbul to ask for support to build another mosque in this area.¹⁸⁷ The mosque that was built near the gate was known as Fukara (Poors') Mosque, but officially it was called Rızaiye Mosque, which gave its name to the surrounding quarter.¹⁸⁸

By the first half of the eighteenth century the growth of the left bank city went beyond its ring of palisades. This is clearly visible on Öbschelwiz' maps of 1718–1720 as well as on the printed maps of the 1720s and 1730s. These maps depict suburbs that developed along the roads leaving the city from the Ürgüb/Leskofça Gate in the west as well as the Istanbul Gate in the east and also in the south of the city. In the explanation to his 1719 map, Öbschelwiz claims that these suburbs were populated by Serbs, Muslims and Roma (*Raitzen, Türcken und Ziegeiner*).¹⁸⁹ This urban expansion accelerated in the second half of the eighteenth century and therefore will be treated in the next chapter in greater detail. In contrast, such a development was prevented on the right bank because the glacis of the fortress had

184 Minna Rozen, 'Public Space and Private Space among the Jews of Istanbul in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Turcica* 30 (1998): 341–344.

185 See the nineteenth-century poll tax register in ML.VRD.CMH.d... 653, p. 113.

186 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 258. There is conflicting evidence as to which *defterdar* (treasurer) built it. Tričković claims that it was also called Yahya Paşa Mosque after Hatibzade Yahya Pasha, commander of Belgrade, who rebuilt it in the 1740s. However, in the nineteenth century there was also a mosque with this name located further to the east. So, probably there were two mosques, Defterdar inside and Yahya Paşa outside Ürgüb Gate.

187 C..EV.. 264/13452, 29 Receb 1139 (22 March 1727).

188 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 256–261.

189 'Plan von der türck. Gräntz Festung Nissa im Königreich Servien. Wie sich solche im Junio 1719 befunden...', National Széchényi Library, Budapest, TK 533, <https://maps.hungaricana.hu/en/OSZKTerkeptar/529/>, page 2, P.

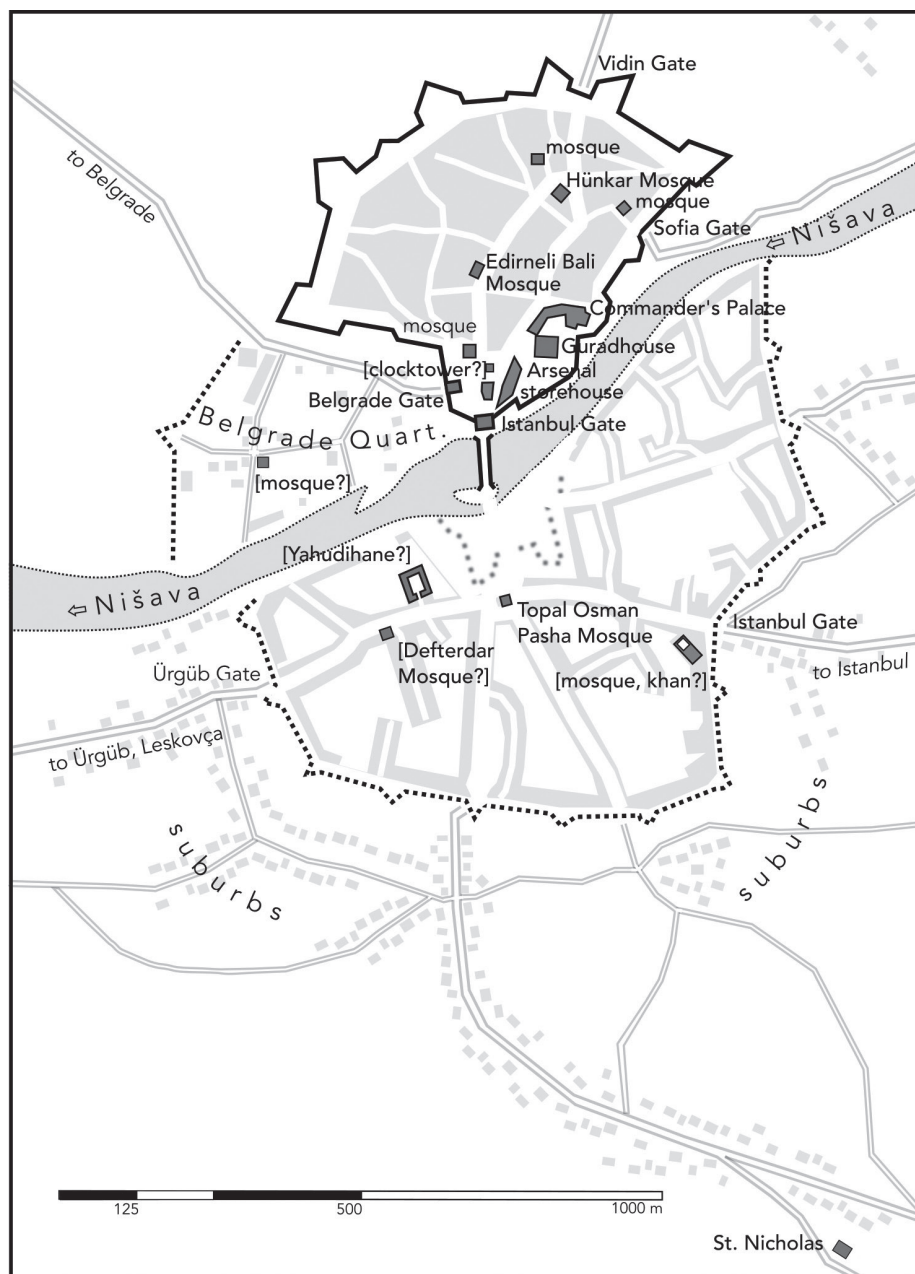


Fig. 3.3: Niš between 1718 and 1739. Based on 'Plan de Nissa', ÖNB, FKB AA 28.1 with additional information from 'Plan de Nissa et de ses environs', 1737, photocopy, and 'Plan von der Vestung Nissa [...]', ÖNB, ALB Port 247-13.

to be kept free from any buildings. The only exception was the Belgrad Quarter, a suburb on the southeastern flank of the fortress, which was settled by Muslim refugees from Belgrade after the Habsburg occupation of that city in 1718.¹⁹⁰

As the 1710 population survey had already suggested, after 1718 the Christians of Niš also settled in the southern part of the left bank city and in the suburbs beyond. In 1722 the bishop was allowed to build a new church called St. Nicholas outside the city ca. one kilometre away in the foothills of the Gorica Mountains to the south. It was possibly erected on the foundations of the medieval cathedral that had been destroyed during the first Ottoman conquest in 1386 and rebuilt at the beginning of the seventeenth century only to be destroyed again in the war at the end of the century.¹⁹¹

In general, churches serve as a good indicator for the social and political integration of Christians in Ottoman cities. Repairing old churches and more so building new ones was a contested issue in the Ottoman Balkans. While in predominantly Christian areas and in villages this posed less of a problem, in cities the Ottoman authorities were very reluctant to grant permission easily for they feared the reaction of local Muslims who could interpret that as a setback to their privileged status. To be able to obtain more and larger houses of worship, Christian congregations had to resort to various tricks, e.g. 'discovering' the groundwork of an ancient church or using private houses that were turned step by step into proper churches. Especially after times of war, unrest or fire, which often left cities destroyed and depopulated, the authorities were more flexible and accommodating in granting permission to restore church buildings.¹⁹²

The construction of St. Nicholas outside the city can be seen as part of the Ottoman political strategy of integrating the Christian community and offering them a position in the empire. However, it can also show how precarious this policy of reconciliation could be when political circumstances changed as happened during the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1737–39.

After the short Habsburg occupation, which lasted only a few months from summer until autumn 1737, Niš became the Ottoman headquarters to organise the defence of Bosnia and the Danube frontier. While in May 1738 the Ottoman imperial army was assembled in Niš to advance on Belgrade, St. Nicholas became the centre of political tensions between the religious communities of the city.

190 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 258.

191 'Sv. Nikola, Crkva (Niš)', in *Niški Leksikon*, ed. Milivoje Stefanović (Belgrade: JP Službeni glasnik i Grad Niš, 2011), 449–550.

192 Rossitsa Gradeva, 'Ottoman Policy Towards Christian Church Building', *Etudes balkaniques* 1994, no. 4: 14–36.

Constantine Dapontes (1714–84), the secretary of Constantine Mavrocordatos, Prince of Walachia and Moldavia, recounts this episode as follows in his chronicle:

The Turks of Niš presented the grand vizier with a petition in which they exposed the crimes the bishop of the city had committed during the occupation [by the Habsburg army]. Asked to abolish the seat of the bishop, the grand vizier agreed and gave orders to convert the poor cathedral of Niš into a medrese at his own expense. This church which was located outside the suburbs was dedicated to St. Nicholas and had a compound larger than that of the Patriarchate [in Constantinople].¹⁹³

In answering this request, Grand Vizier Yeğen Mehmed Pasha converted St. Nicholas into the Conquest (Fethiye) Mosque as a gesture of Muslim supremacy. Such conversions had been more widespread in the fourteenth century, but in singular cases they still happened until the seventeenth century. They can be interpreted as an attempt to occupy central nodes in a territory or religiouscape of another religious group in order to underline a hierarchical relationship.¹⁹⁴ This harsh measure was certainly caused by the ongoing war and the resulting inter-communal tensions, which made the local bishop an easy target of accusations of disloyal behaviour. It is interesting to note that religious confrontation was not necessary the policy of the central government, but that the chain of events was started by the local Muslim community. We can only speculate why the grand vizier agreed to act on the petition by the locals.

At the same time, the government also adopted a more conciliatory stance to reconstruct urban life within the city. For example, the state confiscated and sold the houses of those Christians who had left the city with the Habsburg occupiers. However, these confiscations were open to appeal, as an interesting case shows. An Orthodox monk claimed that he had been on pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the time of the Habsburg occupation. A decree gave him back his property. It seems that later the general order of confiscation was renounced and more houses given back to their former owners.¹⁹⁵

193 Constantine Dapontès, *Éphémérides Daces ou chronique de la guerre de quatre ans, 1736–1739*, tr. Émile Legrand (Paris: Leroux, 1880–88), 2:400.

194 Robert M. Hayden and Timothy D. Walker, 'Intersecting Religiouscapes: A Comparative Approach to Trajectories of Change, Scale, and Competitive Sharing of Religious Spaces,' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81, no. 2 (2013): 399–426.

195 C..ML.. 603/24861 (29/Ca/1151); C..ML.. 169/7127 (16/C /1151); C..DH.. 66/3298 (20/L /1152).

At some point the Christian community also must have been able to build a new church to replace St. Nicholas, but we have very little information about it. An Austrian city plan places a 'Serbian church' (*Ratzische Kirche*) immediately at the Istanbul Gate of the left bank city within an area labelled as 'Serbian city' (*die Ratzen Statt*).¹⁹⁶ This plan seems to rely on the 1737 *Plan de Nissa*, but it is unclear when exactly it was produced and then possibly updated with new information. The fact that the line of fortification around the left bank city was drawn in a manner to indicate a state of disrepair and dilapidation might mean that this plan indicating the position of the church was actually drawn much later, in the 1760s or 1780s.

Johann Andreas Christoph Kempelen, the secretary in the Great Embassy sent to Istanbul after the Peace of 1739, in his account of the journey, also attested to the inter-communal tensions and the problems with reconstructing urban life. Passing through Niš in summer 1740, he claimed that the majority of the pre-war population of Christians and Jews had left the city. The few who had stayed or returned were accused of disloyalty and had to struggle to reclaim their property. Some of them had to buy back relatives who had been sold into slavery. The Ottoman Roma (Kıpti), whom Kempelen describes in some detail were the only exception:

Only the Zingari escaped from the misfortune that other inhabitants suffered. This people, despised by the Christians, retired to the mountains of Sofia while our people occupied Niš and were given back their seats, because they remained loyal to the Turks. There are ca. 2000 families that live in wicker-work houses. For a long time they have lived in these lands and it is not their style of life to move around like our gypsies [Aegypti]. The women oversee the house; the men follow diverse occupations, the majority are craftsmen, they despise agriculture. They are Muslims or Christians or they have no religion at all. Despite the fact that they can choose from one of the two, they do not obey the rites and proscriptions of either.¹⁹⁷

196 'Plan von der Vestung Nissa wie solche Anno 1737 von denen Türcken an die Keyserliche ist übergeben wordern', ÖNB, ALB Port 247–13. The discussion about the position of this church will be resumed in chapter 4.3.

197 Johann Andreas Christoph Kempelen, *Descriptio itineris legatorum Caroli VI. a. 1740 ad Mahmud Turcarum imperatorem missorum*, Ms. p. 47, ÖNB, HAN, Cod. 8640. I would like to thank Heidrun Riedler for her translation from the Latin original. On Kempelen see Klaus Kreiser, 'Zwei unbekannte Beschreibungen des Serails von Edirne aus den Jahren 1740/41', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 3 (1982): 114–142.

Kempelen continues in his description to mark the Ottoman Roma as a distinct group located in between the Muslim/Christian dichotomy. They have their own laws and customs and are also treated as separate by the Ottoman administration because they have to pay the *haraç*, the poll tax that is reserved for Christians. 'The paper, which they get, when they have paid this tax, they display in their houses just like the Bulgarians and thus show in this manner their origin.'¹⁹⁸

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Niš was shaped by the border situation not only through the construction of the fortress; the different groups present in the city, the way they made a place for themselves in urban space and defined the boundaries between each other was also influenced by the confrontation around the border. The development in Niš ran parallel to other border cities on the Ottoman as well as the Habsburg side, which will serve as comparative cases in the next section. These examples suggest the emergence of a certain type of imperial border city, which possessed some typical architectural, demographic and economic traits.

3.4 Border Cities From a Comparative Perspective

Fortress cities became a common city type in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, whose main task was to stabilise the imperial borders against further loss of territory. This did not only concern cities on the border to the Habsburg Monarchy. Examples such as Hotin, Bender, Ochakiv (Ott. Özü) or Azov (Ott. Azak) can be found in the dynamic border regions with Poland-Lithuania and Russia. To illustrate this border city model further and understand the transformation of Niš better, in the following section I will present the parallel cases of its neighbours Vidin and Belgrade, both situated to the north on the Danube. Because these two cities emerged as border cities from the same context of Habsburg-Ottoman rivalry, their development was entangled in various ways.

In 1689, much like Niš, Vidin was also conquered and then re-fortified by the Habsburgs. Once it fell back to the Ottomans, it remained an important border fortress with a large garrison of janissaries. In the time between 1718 and 1739 it took Belgrade's role as the main fortress on the Danubian defence line of the Ottoman Empire. In Vidin as elsewhere, Muslim-Christian relations were negatively affected by the wars and cemented a widening rift between the two groups. Until the seventeenth century, the Christian populations of the region were much better integrated into the Ottoman state and particularly into its military, but were increasingly pushed out of their traditional subsidiary positions in the Ottoman army. As a result, the military became exclusively Muslim to the

198 Kempelen, *Descriptio itineris*, 48.

extent that virtually the entire male Muslim population in the border area was occupied in the military.¹⁹⁹

This logic of segregation in the military continued on an urban level. Vidin offers a clear example of how the new border situation also fundamentally affected the built structure and the settlement pattern of the city. When the fortress of the city was redesigned in 1718, Vidin's local garrison sent a petition (*arzuhâl*) to Istanbul asking for the relocation of the Christian inhabitants from inside the fortress. They argued that this was necessary for reasons of security as required by the 'law of the frontier' (*kanun-ı serhad*).²⁰⁰ The authorities in Istanbul granted the petition and cited the precedence of two cities, Anabolu (Nauplion) in Morea and Niš. As stated in the bureaucratic exchange with the Vidin petitioners, a similar decree to force the Christians to give up their houses inside the fortress had been addressed to the commander of Niš one year earlier. Tričković assumes that the Christians who were evicted from the fortress settled in the village of Jagodin, a few kilometres to the west of the fortress.²⁰¹ This exchange of documents concerning the situation in Vidin clearly highlights the Ottoman government's policy of mistrust and separation. However, at the same time, it also attests to the efforts of the government to regulate its policy and soften negative effects for the Christians. In the case of Vidin, again similar to the situation in Niš, the official decree stressed that the houses of the Christians should be auctioned for fair prices to the members of the garrison and that the resettlement should not be the pretext to expropriate the former owners.

Landownership and the agrarian sector was another important field on which the relations between the religious communities unfolded. In eighteenth-century Vidin the border situation caused a fundamental re-organisation in this area, in which the traditional Ottoman system of land tenure, the *timar* system, which awarded land as prebends in return for military service, was fundamentally transformed. As a form of control over land, the *timar* was superseded by a system called *gospodarlık* that robbed the peasants of their rights to the land they cultivated to turn them into mere sharecroppers. Especially the janissaries of the

199 Rossitsa Gradeva, 'Between Hinterland and Frontier: Ottoman Vidin, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. Andrew C.S. Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 331–351; also see ead., 'War and Peace Along the Danube: Vidin at the End of the Seventeenth Century', *Oriente Moderno* NS 20/81, no. 1 (2001): 149–175; ead., 'Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin: Between Old and New', in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2006), 115–161.

200 Svetlana Ivanova, 'Vidinskiyat Varosh i Kanun-i Serhad', *Istoricheski pregled* 71, no. 3/4 (2015): 84–87. Many thanks to Rossitsa Gradeva for providing this reference.

201 Tričković, 'Urban razvitak', 261.

fortress garrison became quasi-owners of the land surrounding Vidin. In Niš, a similar process of land privatisation was also set in motion. Because the crisis in urban-rural relations about landownership peaked in the nineteenth century, it will be examined more closely below in chapter 6.1.

Arguably, the city affected by the imperial conflict in the most fundamental and lasting manner was Belgrade. It was located directly on the border and was conquered by the Habsburgs three times, in 1688, in 1716, and in 1789 and moreover was occupied longer than any of its neighbours, between 1716 and 1739. This twenty-year period as part of the Kingdom of Serbia, a province directly controlled by the Habsburg monarch, makes Belgrade an especially interesting comparative case. As the biggest city of the Kingdom of Serbia with a governor directly appointed from Vienna, Belgrade offers a striking example of military urbanism, which transformed the city physically as well as regarding its urban social relations. At the same time, as a multi-religious and multi-ethnic city, there are also parallels to Ottoman cities regarding the management of diversity.²⁰²

Similar to the Ottomans, for the Habsburg central government, the fortress of Belgrade was the most important element of the city. Immediately after the conquest the Habsburg military initiated the necessary renovations. When Cornelius von den Driesch passed through Belgrade with the Habsburg embassy in summer 1719, he praised these fortifications and bragged that a native Turk would not recognize the city.²⁰³ In 1723, approximately at the same time as the fortress in Niš was rebuilt by the Ottomans, a process to completely overhaul the fortress in Belgrade started. Money for this decade-long construction effort was mainly raised by the pope.

The city outside the citadel, which was encircled with a new line of defence with nine bastions and four gates, became the second focus of Habsburg urban development. The existing Ottoman city was regularised, i.e. a grid of perpendicular streets was established and new buildings were added. The military constructed barracks and administrative buildings. Likewise, the different Catholic orders built new churches or, like the Catholic bishop, converted existing mosques into churches. This part of Belgrade was populated with ca. 400 families from the German Palatinate, Austria and Hungary who, in 1721, constituted themselves as

202 H. Langer, 'Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung, 1717–1739', *Mitteilungen des Kriegs-Archivs* NS 3 (1889): 155–247; Theodor Ritter von Stefanovic-Vilovsky, 'Belgrad unter der Regierung Kaiser Karls VI. (1717–1739)', *Beiträge zur neueren Geschichte Österreichs* 3 (1908): 2–85; Mirjana Roter Blagojević and Ana Radivojević, 'Les espaces publics et la vie publique à Belgrade au XVIIIe et au XIXe siècle et leur transformation au XXe siècle', *Études balkaniques: Cahiers Pierre Belon* 14 (2007): 107–142.

203 Driesch, *Historische Nachricht*, 38.

the 'German Town'. Three years later the imperial administration regulated this settlement by awarding many privileges to it. The burghers of the German Town gained the right to elect a judge and a magistrate, to levy certain duties, give concessions to pubs and pharmacies, oversee churches and schools and erect a city clock. However, Belgrade fell short of gaining full city rights because Vienna wanted to retain as much control as possible over this strategic place. The military remained highly powerful in the city, which led to repeated conflicts with the civilian population. The most contested issue was the labour duties the burghers were forced to provide for the repair of the fortifications as well as the heavy-handed behaviour of the military authorities that resulted in unjustified arrests of civilians.

Despite these conflicts, the central government tried to promote the German Town as the pillar of imperial interests, reminding the city authorities that 'in Belgrade, as the place on the extreme border and the front [*Vormauer*] of all Christianity, at all times the German nation has to be the most important in activity and number.'²⁰⁴ The government tried to implement this policy by stressing boundaries between the different communities and by enforcing spatial segregation. Accordingly, the same regulation of 1724 tried to curtail Jewish immigration to Belgrade and imposed a 'tolerance fee' on resident Jews. However, this measure could only be extended to German and Hungarian Jews. A rich and influential group of Sephardic Jewish merchants who were Ottoman subjects remained in the city. They controlled trade because they could import goods on low tariffs as agreed to in the Austrian-Ottoman commercial treaty of 1718.

At the same time, the Serbian population was removed from the German Town by decree and had to settle outside the wall in a new quarter on the banks of the Sava River. However, this measure, too, could only be partially implemented. Because of privileges given to the Orthodox Church, the seat of the Orthodox bishop, one of the most important officials in Belgrade, remained within the walled town. A group of rich Serbian, Greek and Armenian merchants also continued to live inside the walls. The new Serbian town (*Raizenstadt*) outside the wall gained partial autonomy and was given the privilege to elect a civil judge (*knez*) and one for its merchants. The merchants' guild was officially recognised in 1725.

In this way, Belgrade was re-modelled as a border city with a new urban form and boundaries according to the interests of the Habsburg Monarchy. After 1740 these boundaries were again re-arranged when the Habsburgs lost the city to the Ottomans in the peace negotiations after the war of 1737–39. This time, all of the German as well as many Serbian inhabitants had to leave the city. Their re-settlement on the Habsburg side of the border, in Zemun (Germ. Semlin),

204 Langer, 'Serbien Unter Kaiserlicher Regierung', 210.

Osijek, Szegedin, Timișoara and the new town of Novi Sad (Germ. Neusatz) at the bridgehead of the fortress Petrovaradin (Germ. Peterwardein), gave an impetus to the urban life of these towns. E.g. Novi Sad obtained city status in 1748 and in Timișoara a new German and Serbian suburb was built.²⁰⁵

Soon after the Ottoman takeover the physical appearance of Belgrade also changed again, as Gudenus remarked when he passed through the city in 1740. As was to be expected, the city's various Catholic churches were either returned to their original function as mosques, were used differently, or were destroyed. Additionally, the relatively wide streets and squares of the German Town were built over by huts, annexes and lean-tos and apparently, the new inhabitants even sold the German flat tiles from the roofs to exchange them for the more familiar rounded ones.²⁰⁶

As the most important Ottoman fortress on the Danube, Belgrade received the honorary title of Dârü'l-cihâd (gate of jihad), which it had already carried in the sixteenth-century period of Ottoman expansion.²⁰⁷ Muslims who had emigrated twenty years previously, first to Vidin and Niš but also to Istanbul and Edirne, came back to Belgrade. In the first Ottoman census of 1741 the two thousand Muslim households constituted a large majority of the re-established city population; additionally, there were 700 soldiers manning the garrison.²⁰⁸ The second largest group were the Jews, who had stayed in the city and now outnumbered the Christians.

As before 1718, Niš was again incorporated into the Belgrade sub-province, or the *sancak* of Semendire as it was officially still known. Although its garrison was largely moved back to the border, Niš remained an important fortress. At most times, a high-ranking commander (*muhafız*) was appointed to the fortress of Niš. In general, the city remained affected by the developments in Belgrade and Vidin, and so the comparative regional perspective will also be important in the next chapter, which will examine the developments at the turn of the eighteenth century.

205 Stefanovic-Vilovsky, 'Belgrad', 59–63.

206 Fritsch, *Paschas und Pest*, 52–55.

207 Selim Aslantaş, 'Belgrad-ı Dârü'l-Cihâd', *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15 (2011): 13–37.

208 Hatice Oruç, 'Belgrade According to the 1741 Dated Tahrir Defter on the Smederevo Sanjak', in *Belgrade 1521–1867*, ed. Srđan Rudić, Selim Aslantaş, and Dragana Amedoski (Belgrade: Institute of History Belgrade/Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, 2018), 193–257.

4 Emerging Territories and New Borders in the Age of the Ayans



Fig. 4.1: Hafız Pasha's konak together with Bekir Bey's 1860s extension visible on the left side. Courtesy of National Museum Niš, Photo Collection, Album of King Milan Obrenović, Inventory number 13.

The most splendid house of Ottoman Niš, in fact a compound of several buildings with a garden in the interior, stretched along the left bank of the river Nišava vis-à-vis the fortress. Had it not been destroyed in a fire in 1917, it might well serve as the city museum today. In Serbia it was known as the King's House (*Kraljev dvor*) because in 1878 the Serbian King Milan bought it from its last Ottoman owner, Bekir (in Serbian Bećir) Bey, who had inherited and then considerably enlarged

the original *konak* that his grandfather Hafız Pasha had built at the turn of the eighteenth century. After a restoration, which preserved some of the 'oriental' elements, the Serbian king used it as his residence whenever he stayed in Niš.²⁰⁹

This chapter will reconstruct the urban development of Niš in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by focusing on the builder of the *konak*, Hafız Pasha, and his son Mahmud. They were the most important representatives of the Hafızpaşazade dynasty, as they are sometimes called after their eponymous founder, who can count as a late example of a family of local notables. Such notables, known as *ayans* in the Ottoman context, had been rising throughout the Ottoman Empire since the seventeenth century. In the literature, they have been connected to the secular trend of decentralisation in the Ottoman political system and the resulting changes in the territorial outlook among Ottoman elites.

The rise of the Hafızpaşazades, which the first section will focus on, started in the janissary milieu of Belgrade and Niš in the second half of the eighteenth century and was completed during the time of war and general insecurity that characterised Ottoman Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Hafız and his son rose to a position of political power because they became allies of the central government in its struggle with internal rebels, most importantly Osman Pasvantoğlu, the quasi-independent ruler of Vidin. Rather than inter-imperial confrontation, which was the focus of the previous chapter, internal power struggles of the Ottoman elites characterised the region at the turn of the eighteenth century. Only during the last Habsburg-Ottoman war of 1788–90, when Belgrade was conquered by the Habsburgs, did Niš settle again for a very short time into its traditional geo-political position.

Apart from Pasvantoğlu in Vidin, the Christian inhabitants of the province of Belgrade were another Ottoman group who tried to establish an autonomous territory for themselves. Their struggle against the janissaries of Belgrade and the Ottoman central government between 1804 and 1813, which is conventionally called the First Serbian Uprising, is in many ways connected to the history of the Hafızpaşazades and their city. What in nationalist Serbian historiography has been read retrospectively as the establishment of a Serbian nation state looks quite different from an Ottoman perspective. Similar to the Greek revolt of 1821–30, the Serbian case offers many causal as well as personal links to the political culture of rebellion inside the Ottoman elite. Moreover, a direct attack of the rebels on Niš

209 'Dvor Kralja Milana' and 'Hafis-Pašin Konak', in *Niški Leksikon*, ed. Milivoje Stefanović (Belgrade: JP Službenik i Grad Niš, 2011), 114, 558. The photo was part of an album presented to King Milan. About the album and photos in it, see Jelena Radovanović, 'Between Past and Future Ruins: Post-Ottoman Niš in the Album of Knez Milan Obrenović', *Journal of Material Culture* 27, no. 4 (December 2022): 359–376.

in 1809 calls for a closer look at urban society and the issue of ethnic and religious identity at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Focusing on the complicated links between internal territorialisations of power and international ones, this chapter in more general terms will examine their repercussions on cities in Ottoman Europe. Urban elites and populations had to defend their cities against the intrusions of bandits, but also against the exactions of the central government and its agents. In many cases, cities such as Niš successfully practiced forms of political autonomy, as the third section shows. Moreover, this political constellation affected the urban form of Niš, turning the 'imperial city' into a typical Balkan provincial town. Hafız Pasha's *konak* serves as the most visible expression of this shift. From an urbanistic perspective, in the second half of the eighteenth century the left bank city became the centre of urban growth, which was supported by a favourable economic conjuncture, as the last section will show.

Despite the political upheaval at the end of the century, the second half of the eighteenth century was a time of economic growth and relative prosperity for the Ottoman Balkans. The growing export trade was very profitable for Niš as a transport hub at the crossroads of several routes of trade and traffic connecting the Balkans with Central Europe. The last section of this chapter will focus on this economic conjuncture and in particular on its consequences for the city population. Apart from encouraging rural to urban migration, which slowly tipped the balance in favour of the Christians of Niš, with the Aromanian immigrants from Macedonia, a new group was added to the mix of urban diversity.

4.1 The Hafızpaşazade Family

The founder of the principal family of Niš and builder of the *konak* to the east of the bridgehead on the left bank of the river was Hafız Mustafa Pasha. In 1805, at the peak of his political career and shortly before he died, he was nominated governor of Belgrade. In 1800/01 (1215 AH), he had been awarded the honorary rank of *kapıcıbaşı*²¹⁰ and before had held the office of deputy governor (*mütesellim*) since at least 1797.²¹¹ The office of *mütesellim* was a typical springboard for members of the local elite to reach a higher office in the central government. In the eighteenth century, governors regularly appointed deputies recruited from among the influential and well-to-do local families to oversee the subordinate districts of their provinces or to act in their stead while they were away on a campaign or in the capital. In other cases, a *mütesellim* could also act on behalf of an absentee

210 HAT 245/13821, 29 Zilhicce 1215 (13 May 1801).

211 HAT 46/2266, 21 Cemazeyilahir 1212 (11 December 1797).

governor who had been given his office as a sinecure. For certain areas the Imperial Treasury nominated deputy governors to supervise the collection of revenues that were assigned directly to the centre and not to the provincial administration. The attraction of the office of *mütesellim* was the right to collect taxes in the name of the central government as well as to establish troops to fight bandits. These duties offered many means of personal enrichment by embezzlement, taking excessive fees or accepting bribes.²¹²

By acquiring an office that allowed him to act in the name of the government, Hafız was able to distinguish himself from among a group usually called notables as a translation for various Ottoman terms such as *ayan*, *vücuḥ*, *eşraf*, *derebey* and others. Critics have frequently noted that ‘notable’ is a particularly loose category. In a most general understanding the term describes an intermediary group of local elites who could be distinguished in different ways e.g. by their religious education or religious office as *kadı*, *molla* or *seyyid*, by their actual or former connection to the central government as office holders or soldiers posted to the province, or by their key positions in economic life. Any of these different elite positions offered the opportunity to create wealth, which was the basic precondition for *ayan* status in this broad understanding. Comparative studies have shown that the origin and composition of this elite, the sources of its power and its relationship with the state and the population varied according to time and place. So, it remains essential to contextualise local notables.²¹³

In Ottoman Europe notables ascended to their prominent role from the late sixteenth century, at a time when the structure of the Ottoman state changed profoundly. In dire need of cash to finance wars under changing technological conditions, the Ottoman state increasingly farmed out tax revenue from land, first on a temporal basis, and then increasingly for lifetime; on the district (*kaza*) level these tax farms ended up in the hands of local elites who could effectively manage them and turned the taxed land into their quasi-private property. From this material basis, this local elite was called to support the state in times of crisis.

212 Yücel Özkaya, *18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Toplumı*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 204–206; Halil İnalçık, ‘Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration’, in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 30–35; . Musa Çadırcı, ‘Tanzimat’ın İlânı Sıralarında Türkiye’de Yönetim (1826–1839)’, *Belleten* 51, no. 201 (1987): 1229–1232.

213 Canay Şahin, ‘The Rise and Fall of an Ayân Family in Eighteenth Century Anatolia: The Caniklizâdes (1737–1808)’ (PhD thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2003), 23–38; İnalçık, ‘Centralization and Decentralization’, 37–41.

At the same time, this elite could act as a protector of the local population against oppression by agents of the central government.²¹⁴

From the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, the Ottoman central government frequently enlisted the help of provincial notables (*ayan-ı vilayet*) for tasks such as organising provisions for the army, assessing and distributing extraordinary war taxes, fighting banditry or keeping up post stations (*menzil*). During the wars against the Habsburg Monarchy at the turn of the seventeenth century, cooperation became regular and the central government created the office of a chief-*ayan* for each district. Periodically, the government tried to specify the responsibilities of this office to avoid conflict between governors and notables as well as among notables. While at the beginning of the eighteenth century the office holders were appointed in consultation with the population from among several candidates in some cases, later the office frequently was violently contested or became the 'property' of one family, whose power sometimes extended beyond its district.²¹⁵

In the eighteenth century some notables developed into veritable warlords by employing disbanded soldiers and striking alliances with brigand groups. In Anatolia and the Balkans, they were governing territories that assumed the character of small, quasi-independent states. In its struggle with these warlords the central government often relied on their rivals, but also on lesser notables. They became 'partners of the empire'²¹⁶ – a description that also fits the Hafızpaşazades very well, as will become evident.

The history of Niš was deeply affected by this general political development of governance and the alternating forms of cooperation and conflict between different groups in Ottoman provincial society. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Nišli Mehmed Ağa and his sons serve as an example of a notable family at the pinnacle of Ottoman provincial administration. For a long time, Mehmed Ağa

214 Halil İnalcık, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 283–337. For a general treatment of this process with many references to the *ayan*, see Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

215 Avdo Suceška, 'Bedeutung und Entwicklung des Begriffes A'yan im Osmanischen Reich', *Südost Forschungen* 25 (1966): 13–19; Vera Mutaščieva, 'L'institution de l'ayanlık pendant les dernières décennies du XVIIIe siècle', *Études Balkaniques* 2–3 (1965): 233–247.

216 Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 65–116. Especially on the term warlord, see Robert Zens, 'Ottoman Provincial Notables in the Eighteenth Century: A Comparative Study', in *Perspectives on Ottoman Studies: Papers from the 18th Symposium of the International Committee of Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Studies (CIEPO)*, ed. Ekrem Čaušević, Nenad Močanin and Vjeron Kursar (Münster: LIT, 2010), 245–252.

held the office of *voyvoda*, collecting taxes and managing other financial resources of the district, which generated the salaries of the garrison among other things. At the same time, he was the market inspector (*muhtesib*) and his brother oversaw the *menzil* station of the city. From this local basis Mehmed found an office in the imperial bureaucracy: he was one of the negotiators at Passarowitz in 1718 and accompanied the Habsburg ambassador to Istanbul together with Driesch; however, the latter does not mention Mehmed in his travel account.²¹⁷ In 1722 he was sent on a mission to Russia as an Ottoman ambassador, and then he was temporarily exiled to Kastamonu before he died in office in Egypt. His sons continued to act as subcontractors of tax farms and held other important offices in Niš.²¹⁸

This example shows that although the last chapter did stress the imperial character of Niš as it was manifest in the fortress, at the same time, the city was also governed like a normal Ottoman provincial city. Local forces played an important role in the system of provincial governance that had developed throughout the seventeenth century. Nišli Mehmed Ağa embodies the smooth functioning of this system that, among other things, also served as a conduit for local elites to the centre of power. In contrast, the rise of Hafız Mustafa in the second half of the eighteenth century went less smoothly and can serve as an example of the conflicts inherent in the system.

In many ways Hafız' origin and career constitute a mirror of the political and economic history of the border province of Belgrade to which Niš had belonged again since 1739. He was the son of one Emir Hafız Hacı Mustafa, a coffee merchant and moneylender originating from Alaiye, present-day Alanya in Turkey. The father did business in Niš starting in the 1730s with the bishops of Niš and Samakov among others. Apparently, he went to Belgrade when the city became Ottoman again in 1739 but was evicted from there together with other moneylenders in 1755.²¹⁹

As his title *emir* indicates, Emir Mustafa was a janissary in the sense that he was paid by the central government as part of the garrison of Niš or Belgrade. His trading and moneylending activities suggest that he was not a professional soldier but rather belonged to those members of the janissary corps who were mainly engaged in the urban economy as artisans or merchants. Over the seventeenth century, an increasing number of civilians had bought themselves into the corps and thus had changed the janissaries from a purely military formation

217 ĪE.HR.. 13/1321, 29 Cemazeyilevvel 1132 (8 April 1720).

218 Radmila Tričković, 'Niš u XVIII veku', in *Istorija Niša*, vol. 1, *Od najstarijih vremena do oslobođenja od Turaka 1878. godine*, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 209, 213, 216; Aydın Mertayak, 'Nišli Mehmed Ağa', *Historians of the Ottoman Empire*, August 2008, <https://ottomanhistorians.uchicago.edu/en/historians/89>.

219 Tričković, 'Niš u XVIII veku', 228, 236.

to being a socio-political corporation. Membership in the corps was attractive not so much for the salaries, but because the janissaries offered protection for their members from competitors and sometimes even from their own guilds, with force if necessary. Another incentive were the regiments' cash boxes, which could provide their members with credit.²²⁰

In Emir Mustafa's case, we do not know whether his moneylending activities really had something to do with these primitive janissary banks or if he used his own capital. But it is easy to see how the affiliation with one of the corps stationed in Niš and later in Belgrade was an advantage for a coffee merchant who wanted to expand his business into Southeast Europe.

The son Hafız followed in the footsteps of his father: he was also a janissary, belonging to the Twelfth Regiment (*onikinci bölük*), but in his case we have no information of any trading activities. Rather, the son seems to have invested the family fortune into land. He held a *timar*, which had become objects of investment and speculation in the seventeenth century and had lost their original function of supporting a cavalry soldier. In addition, Hafız Mustafa also had private landholdings (*çiflik*) over which he was in constant litigation and violent confrontation with other *ayans*.²²¹

Emir Mustafa and his son were part of a new elite forming in the Belgrade province in the second half of the eighteenth century after the province had been integrated into the Ottoman Empire again. The janissaries of the border fortresses, also called *yamaks* in this special context, were well placed to become the most influential local group whose most powerful members could claim *ayan* status. They had the means of coercion to insert themselves into the local economy, gaining the upper hand over other military groups such as the soldiers of the local garrison (*yerli*) and the *sipahis*, the prebendal landholding cavalry. As in other parts of Ottoman Europe where this process happened earlier, all of these groups emerging from the Ottoman military were also the main agents of privatizing land and appropriating large private estates.²²² Because this was such a fundamental development and had repercussions until well into the nineteenth century, it must be introduced here in some detail as one important source of the *ayans*' wealth.

The wars in the first half of the eighteenth century caused the reconfiguration of the countryside in the Belgrade province after it became part of the Ottoman

220 Tezcan, *Second Ottoman Empire*, 198–212.

221 Tričković, 'Niš u XVIII veku', 234–236.

222 Selim Aslantaş, *19. Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar: Osmanlıda Sırp İsyanları* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007); Robert W. Zens, 'In the Name of the Sultan: Hacı Mustafa Pasha of Belgrade and Ottoman Provincial Rule in the Late 18th Century', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 131–133.

Empire again in 1739. Because two thirds of all villages were abandoned, the traditional Ottoman prebendal system of landholding ceased to function properly. There was a lot of empty land for which the *sipahis* had no use. Individuals from the *yerli* and janissary garrisons could buy it as private estates called *çiftlik* or they could act as sub-contractors (*subaşı*) for the *sipahis*. The wars also created a mass of free-floating peasants who were no longer part of the original system of land tenure. Administratively, they were treated similarly to nomads. When they settled on private land, they often had to accept paying more taxes and duties as compared to the regular peasants.²²³

As long as *çiftlik* estates were created from unoccupied land and remained relatively small, this process was unproblematic, legal and even encouraged by the central authorities. But in many cases possessors of smaller *çiftliks* tried to take over neighbouring regular villages to create larger landholdings. Janissary owners especially often seem to have used violence, but also without illegal methods the heavy tax pressure combined with debts resulted in many peasants willingly selling their land, or rather the right to inherit it, to *çiftlik* owners. Even the constant litigation by those *sipahis* who could not or would not participate in this practice was unsuccessful in the long run because the Ottoman government lacked the means to enforce its rulings against the *çiftlik* owners, who frequently colluded with the local authorities such as the governor or the *kadı* of Belgrade.

In Niš even the villages whose taxes were earmarked to directly finance the military infrastructure were not immune from this process. In the 1760s it became increasingly difficult to pay the salaries of the fortress garrison (*yerlis*) because a group of *ayans*, beys, janissaries and *sipahis* had appropriated these villages. The official holder of the tax farm of which these villages were part complained in vain that these *ayans* were withholding his money.²²⁴

Questions of landownership and taxation in the rural hinterland were impacting cities such as Belgrade, Vidin and Niš throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in many ways. It is hard to overestimate the countryside as a factor in urban developments. For example, it provided the urban elites with wealth and income, but also was at the root of the peasant discontent that fuelled the Serbian Uprising as well as the 1841 revolt in Niš, which will be examined below in chapter 6.1.

223 Radmila Tričković, 'Čitlučenje u Beogradskom Pašaluku u XVIII veku', *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta* 11, no. 1 (1970): 525–549.

224 Ibid., 544.

In the next stage of his career, which occurred after the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1788–90, Hafız Mustafa translated the wealth and influence of his family generated by trade, moneylending and landownership into political power. The poor performance of the Ottoman army in this and in the parallel war against Russia (1787–92) triggered an army reform initiated by Sultan Selim III, who had ascended the throne in 1789. When retaking Belgrade in 1791 the government wanted full control of this geo-strategic border province and took the opportunity to get rid of the *yamaks*, who were not only accused of military ineffectiveness, but also of treason. Reportedly, they had given over Belgrade to the enemy to protect their wealth that had been stolen from the Christian subjects or acquired by trade.²²⁵ The *yamaks* were to be replaced by newly formed regiments recruited from the *yerlis*. While on the way to his post, the new governor appointed to Belgrade, Ebu Bekir Pasha, executed the leader of the Belgrade *yamaks* who had come to meet him in Niš. His head was sent to Istanbul and the *yamaks* were expelled from the province. In the decade leading up to the Serbian Uprising, groups of *yamaks* who wanted to return to Belgrade remained in a constant violent struggle with the governors of the city. After several unsuccessful attempts, they were finally successful in 1801 with the support of the rebel *ayan* Osman Pasvantoğlu in Vidin, as we will see below.²²⁶

Returning to 1791, Governor Ebu Bekir's harsh measures triggered a janissary rebellion in Niš that was led by, among others, Hafız Mustafa. After a fight, the rebels had to flee and set up camp in Gurgušovac (present-day Knjaževac in Serbia), a small *palanka* 60 kilometres to the north-east of Niš on the road to Vidin, where they united with other *yamaks* waiting for a convenient moment to return to Belgrade. Hafız Mustafa was able to return to Niš only in 1793, when he was offered a pardon by the next governor of Belgrade, Hacı Mustafa Pasha.²²⁷ Even the citizens vouched for him, describing him in a petition as a 'real Nišli and an honourable man'. It seems that Hafız Mustafa became Hacı Mustafa Pasha's man in Niš at a time when the government planned to separate it from the province of Belgrade.²²⁸

From the point of view of the central government, no less pressing than the problems with the Belgrade *yamaks* and in many ways related was the revolt of

225 Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, first ed. (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amira, 1279–1302), 5:79–80.

226 Aslantaş, 19. *Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar*, 52–63.

227 Zens, 'In the Name of the Sultan'.

228 Tričković, 'Niš u XVIII veku', 234–235.

the *ayan*-warlord of Vidin, Osman Pasvantoğlu (d. 1807).²²⁹ Coming from a rich family of janissaries much like Hafız Mustafa, Osman was able to consolidate his position of power in Vidin starting from the late 1780s. By building up a private army and cooperating with bands of unemployed soldiers and bandits, he began to rule a sizable territory centred on the city from which he evicted the appointed governor. He pursued a sort of independent domestic and foreign policy in his territory and is in this manner comparable to figures such as Tepedelenli Ali Pasha (ca. 1740–1822), the ruler of Yanya (Ioannina in Greece), or even to Mehmed Ali (1769–1849) who formed a territory in Egypt on an even grander scale. From his capital of Vidin, which Osman Pasvantoğlu also embellished with new buildings, he tried to expand in all directions: to the east, he was involved in fights with the *ayan* of Rusçuk (Ruse), to the south, he threatened Sofia and Niš, and to the west, he supported the *yamaks* of Belgrade against the central government by providing them with weapons and logistical support.

It was not only his expansionist behaviour that pitted Osman Pasvantoğlu against the central government. He also had become the figurehead of all of those socio-political corporations that were opposed to the reforms of Sultan Selim, such as the traditional military corps, who feared for their prestige and privileges. Three times, in 1795, 1798 and 1800 the Ottoman government initiated punitive expeditions against Pasvantoğlu and besieged him in Vidin; however, each time these armies for different reasons had to withdraw, and in the ensuing negotiations, the sultan offered a pardon to Osman who pledged his loyalty.

In these confrontations Hafız Mustafa could prove useful because the central government had to enlist the help of local *ayans* to counter the forces Pasvantoğlu had assembled in Vidin. Especially for those on the borders of Pasvantoğlu's sphere of influence, it was not always an easy decision whether to support the government or not. We have no information about Hafız Mustafa's position during the first punitive expedition against Pasvantoğlu in 1795. Possibly, he was part of the host of local and central forces that encircled Vidin and forced Pasvantoğlu to plead for mercy with the sultan.²³⁰ But because Pasvantoğlu broke all his promises, continued his raiding on neighbouring territories and supported the *yamaks*

229 Rossitsa Gradeva, 'Osman Pasvantoğlu of Vidin: Between Old and New', in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2006), 115–161; ead., 'Between Hinterland and Frontier: Ottoman Vidin, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. Andrew C.S. Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 331–351; Robert Zens, 'Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791–1807', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (2002): 89–104.

230 *Tarih-i Cevdet*, first ed., 6:174–175 does not mention him, though.

in their attempts to re-capture Belgrade, the government soon planned a second campaign against Vidin.

In 1798, as he prepared for this military operation, Hafız Mustafa, who meanwhile had become *mütesellim* of Niš, was courted as a loyal supporter of government. In order to sustain his activities against Pasvantoğlu's men, he was awarded a sum of 5,000 *kuruş* to pay for soldiers and their rations.²³¹ However, Hafız Mustafa subsequently came into conflict with the government as we can learn from a report by Admiral Hüseyin Pasha, who was in charge of the operations.²³² To block Pasvantoğlu's movements, the admiral sent loyal officers with troops to the cities surrounding Vidin. In Niš, which offered an important passage to Vidin, Hafız Mustafa tried to prevent the stationing of troops on two occasions and instead petitioned the government to be appointed governor (*muhafız*) of the city himself. In a direct confrontation with a government official arriving in person, Hafız justified his opposition very frankly. The report switches to direct speech when it relays Hafız's answer to the official's question of why he did not fully cooperate. Hafız argues: 'You have no troops. You cannot protect us. When the bandits come, they will destroy us.' According to the report, Hafız continued to cooperate with Pasvantoğlu's men in the area, giving them supplies and blocking the advance of government troops (*sekban*) from Albania. We have no means to tell, whether these allegations were true or just the slander of an official trying to justify his lack of success in his operations against the warlord of Vidin. However, it is not unlikely that Hafız, assessing the balance of forces, sided with the stronger side, i.e. with Pasvantoğlu.

When fortunes turned against Osman Pasvantoğlu in subsequent years, we see Hafız return to the camp of the central government. Between 1800 and his death in 1807, Pasvantoğlu's sphere of influence was largely limited to Vidin and its immediate environs. In the year 1801 (1215 and 1216 AH) the reports of the officials of the central government are full of praise for Hafız's operations against bandits that were allied to Pasvantoğlu in the region north of Niš.²³³ Additionally, Hafız was able to translate his office and rank into material wealth. In 1802, as a sign of his growing influence as a main supporter of the government against

231 HAT 266/15449, 29 Zilhicce 1212 (14 June 1798).

232 HAT 71/2967, 14 Receb 1213 (22 December 1798). Likewise, see the earlier reports in HAT 46/2266, 21 Cemazeyilahir 1212 (11 December 1797) and HAT 45/2216, 7 Cemazeyilahir 1213 (16 November 1798).

233 E.g. HAT 63/2768, 6 Şaban 1215 (23 December 1800); HAT 79/3291, 14 Cemazeyilahir 1216 (22 October 1801).

Pasvantoglu, he was entrusted with the administration of the customs revenues of Niš and Belgrade.²³⁴

At that point, there was no doubt that Hafız Mustafa was on the right side and consequently, he was chosen by the central government as a trouble-shooter when the Serbian Uprising broke out in 1804. He was about to take the next step in his career, which would have made him governor of Belgrade in the rank of a vizier. But he died an untimely death in 1805 under circumstances that will be examined in the next section. While ending his personal career, his death was also the crucial moment for the success and succession of his family. In the Ottoman political system, the estate of a state servant was subject to confiscation (*müsadere*). Traditionally, the sultan employed this prerogative vis-à-vis high officials such as grand viziers. In the eighteenth century, especially during the financial crisis in the last quarter of the century, confiscations became more widespread and were also used as means to control provincial notables and curb their wealth. However, confiscation was never an automatic process, but an option that the state had to weigh carefully before employing. Especially in the case of provincial notables who were involved in local economies and credit relations, the central state had great difficulties in finding all of their assets, let alone seizing them. The ultimate danger was that the deceased had more debts than receivables and that the state would have to settle these debts.²³⁵

Because Hafız Mustafa was both a notable as well as a recent member of the central bureaucracy, it was standard procedure when the Ottoman Treasury send an agent (*mübaşir*) to Niš to examine his estate. Unfortunately, the detailed probate inventory (*muhallefat defteri*) this official produced and send to Istanbul is not extant in the archives. It would provide excellent insight into the socio-economic and cultural life of the provincial elite at the turn of the eighteenth century. But the correspondence relating to the case and especially the concluding report of the Ottoman treasurer (*defterdar*) give a good impression of Hafız Mustafa's relation to the centre and, to a lesser degree, also provide some information on his personal life.²³⁶

²³⁴ Tričković, 'Niš u XVIII veku', 238.

²³⁵ Yasin Arslantaş, 'Making Sense of Müsadere Practice, State Confiscation of Elite Wealth, in the Ottoman Empire, circa 1453–1839', *History Compass* 17, no. 6 (2019): e12548; Yaycioglu, *Partners*, 107–111.

²³⁶ The *defterdar*'s concluding report can be found in C..ML.. 784/31957, 20 Zilhicce 1220 (11 March 1806) and in a similar version in C..AS.. 669/28108, 26 Zilhicce 1220 (17 March 1806); for other letters on the case see C..ML.. 524/21411, 13 Şaban 1220 (6 November 1805); C..ML.. 524/21434, 16 Şaban 1220 (9 November 1805); C..ML.. 363/14865, 29 Zilhicce 1221 (9 March 1807); C..ML.. 537/22075, 13 Şaban 1220 (6 November 1805).

For the central government, the most important issue in the examination of the estate was the settling of its accounts with the deceased concerning tax revenue. As *mütesellim* of Niš, Hafız Mustafa was charged with collecting certain taxes in the district such as the *cizye* and a tax on wool. The examination of the estate of the deceased was to establish which taxes he had already collected and passed on to the centre. For example, he still owed the treasury the considerable sum of over 50,000 *kuruş* from the *cizye* of the years 1217, 1219 and 1220 AH (1802–1806).²³⁷ The treasurer's report claims that together with private debts, Hafız Mustafa had financial obligations of around 72,000 *kuruş*. Another unpaid sum of 4,000 *kuruş* was the wages of the garrison of Niš Fortress for the year 1216 AH (1801/02). Moreover, the state was interested in the belongings of the deceased, starting with his most valuable asset, the land he owned. The treasurer's report refers to 27 properties (*emlak*) and farms (*çiftlik*), but only mentions the one in Medoševac, today a suburb of Niš, by name. Moreover, the report admitted that the agent had difficulties with establishing reliable information about all of the properties. Most fundamentally, he could only list those in the district of Niš and not any in other parts of the country. Information about production, the number of peasants and their contractual relation, i.e. if they gave one tenth or one seventh of the harvest, also could not be established. Moreover, the report states that some of these *çiftlik*s were disputed, and Hafız Mustafa's enemies claimed that he had acquired them using illegal means. As other cases show, such third-party interventions were not uncommon and made it even more difficult for the state to establish the estate subject to confiscation.²³⁸

On the whole, these problems revealed an underlying problem of the Ottoman state: Istanbul knew little about the local economies, even concerning a principally immovable asset such as land, which was much harder to hide than cash. Chapter 6.1 will examine the attempts by the central state in the second half of the nineteenth century to finally regulate the property relations in the countryside. This will also be the occasion to follow up on the landholdings of the Hafızpaşazade family, which – to anticipate this – remained a cornerstone of their wealth even after the death of their eponymous founder.

Apart from his landholdings, Hafız Mustafa also owned 40 shops and other properties in the city of Niš. The treasurer's report singles out a bath for men and women (*çifte hamam*) at the Woolweavers' Market (*abacı suk*) as the most valuable,

Thanks to Umut Soysal for making these documents accessible to me and providing a translation for some of them.

237 Also see C..ML.. 524/21411; the calculations are difficult to understand, though.

238 Yavuz Cezar, 'Bir Âyanın Muhallefatı: Havza ve Köprü Kazaları Âyanı Kör İsmail-Oğlu Hüseyin', *Belleten* 41, no. 161 (1977): 41–78.

which was actually owned by Hafız Mustafa's daughter. From among the personal property of the deceased, only the most ostentatious pieces are mentioned in the treasurer's concluding report. Because the original of the probate inventory is not extant, we have no insight into daily life and material culture as such documents have provided in similar cases.²³⁹ The most expensive item was a decorated coach (*hint*), which was estimated at 3,000 *kuruş*, and 35 pieces of bridle decorated with silver as well as many horses and cattle. Among his possessions the agent also found military equipment, including 25 barrels of powder, three chests with cartridges, 76 small and 24 large tents.

Finally, the report gives a short account of Hafız Mustafa's household and family. At the time of his death, he possessed ten female white slaves (*cariye*) and one male white slave (*gulam*). He had a wife (*zevce-i menkuha*) as well as five concubines (*ümmülveled*) from whom he had ten sons and daughters. The family petitioned the government, asking to inherit the property of the deceased, because the orphans had no other income. Because this request was granted after the tax debts of Hafız Mustafa had been paid to the central government and the army and the military equipment had been handed to the fortress commander, the family continued its existence as one of the leading families of Niš. In the following we will briefly introduce Mahmud, one of Hafız Mustafa's sons, who made a similar career as his father, securing the political influence of the Hafızpaşazades.

As long as the central government was not able to fully control warlords or bandits in the provinces, it had to rely on local nobles for keeping them in check. These notables were awarded titles and offices in return for their help. This mechanism that had supported the rise of Hafız Mustafa continued well into the nineteenth century and also helped his son Mahmud, born around in 1797, to consolidate his position. Just like his father's fight against Pasvantoğlu, Mahmud earned the gratitude of the government by opposing İşkodralı Mustafa Pasha (1797–1860), the governor-turned-rebel of Shkodër (Ott. İşkodra) in northern Albania. İşkodralı Mustafa had risen to a powerful position because he had assisted the government as a check on Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, the ruler of Ioannina. Ali had started as a bandit leader, then attained the office of governor of Ioannina in the 1780s and began to establish a quasi-independent territory in Epirus, Thessaly and southern Albania. Only in the 1820s was the central government under Mahmud II able to oust him from this position and execute him after his defeat.²⁴⁰

239 Ibid.; Lajos Fekete, 'Das Heim eines türkischen Herrn in der Provinz im XVI. Jahrhundert', *Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29 (1960): 1–30.

240 Mustafa L. Bilge, 'Mustafa Paşa, Buşatlı', in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 31, 344–345.

A couple of years later and in a similar way İškodralı Mustafa also came into conflict with the central government because he opposed the control of his territory and the implementation of army reforms. In 1831 when İškodralı Mustafa successfully rose against the central government, conquering Skopje, Niš and Sofia, the sultan declared him a rebel, and he was beaten back by government forces. Besieged in Shkodër, Mustafa had to plead for mercy and subsequently was taken to Istanbul, where he was integrated into the government apparatus again after some time.

Hafız Mustafa's son Mahmud opposed İškodralı Mustafa when the latter occupied Niš. In a surprise attack in 1831, Mahmud was able to evict the Albanians Mustafa had stationed in the fortress of Niš. This awarded Mahmud the praise of Niš *kadı* as 'being a humble son of the Sublime State since a long time'²⁴¹ as well as the official rank of *miriman*. At the same time, he was named governor (*muhafız*) of his hometown.

Like his father, Mahmud also organised the fight against bandits.²⁴² Together with the help of loyal troops from Vidin, he prosecuted a local bandit called Karafeyzioğlu Ali, who was the son of the notorious bandit leader active in the Balkans around the turn of the eighteenth century. Karafeyzi, Ali's father, who had been connected to Pasvantoglu, was at the centre of events that led to the First Serbian Uprising in 1804, which will be discussed in detail in the next section. First, his plundering activity was one of the reasons that provoked the rebellion before, in 1805, he was offered pardon and employed by the state to act as a check on the emerging Serbian territory. He was installed as *ayan* in the border area of the districts of Breznik and Tran (Ott. İznebol) in present-day Bulgaria and Pirot (Ott. Şehirköy) in present-day Serbia from whence he was allowed to terrorise and plunder the communities beyond the new border. His son Ali inherited this position, but apparently also plundered on the wrong side of the border.²⁴³

Mahmud Pasha was not only able to consolidate the political position his father had created; he also made the family one of the richest of Niš. The register of the wealth and income survey the Ottoman government conducted in 1845 lists the assets of Hafız's sons Mahmud and Ali: they possessed four shops in the city, two watermills in villages outside the city, and several houses with meadows as well as arable land. The rents from these shops and land holdings amounted to a yearly sum of 15,800 *kuruş*, which made the two brothers the richest inhabitants of Niš.

²⁴¹ HAT 430/21900, 6 Zilhicce 1246 (18 May 1831), 'öte(denberide) bendezade-i devlet-i aliyeden olarak'. Also see the report in HAT 418/21649, 9 Zilhicce 1246 (21 May 1831).

²⁴² HAT 430/21910, 29 Zilhicce 1246 (10 June 1831).

²⁴³ Tolga U. Esmer, 'Economies of Violence, Banditry and Governance in the Ottoman Empire Around 1800', *Past & Present* 224, no. 1 (2014): 163–199.

Because the survey did not account for wealth in cash and does not give information about tax farming activities, it is reasonable to assume that the family was even richer.²⁴⁴

The next generations of the Hafızpaşazade family, too, were able to maintain their dominant position until the end of the Ottoman period. This did not materialise in political offices as much as previously, but rather in wealth that was in large measure generated from landownership. In 1878 the sons of Mahmud, Bekir Bey (the owner of the *konak*) and his brother Ahmed Bey, together with Bekir's son Mustafa Bey, claimed ownership of about 130,000 *dönüm* of farmland in the district of Niš from which they collected ca. three million *kuruş* annually. These are figures from a list Muslim landowners drew up in 1878 in order to claim compensation from the Serbian state in the framework of the Berlin Treaty that regulated the transition of landed property.²⁴⁵ Even if we consider the figures as rather too high than too low, as a more detailed discussion in chapter 6.1 will show, they still give an impression as to the continuity of family fortunes over the nineteenth century.

In summary, the Hafızpaşazades of Niš rose from the rich and powerful janissary families in the province of Belgrade in the second half of the eighteenth century. By allying themselves with the central state in the phase of transformation at the turn of the eighteenth century, Hafız Mustafa was able to attain the highest offices. The continuity that engaged two generations of the local elite in an intricate relationship with the agents of the central government is striking. In this relationship the role of the individual players seems to have been largely contingent and exchangeable. Frequently, careers changed from loyal servant of the sultan to rebel, from bandit to fighter for the empire and sometimes back again. Violence and insecurity, which fuelled all of these careers, were often connected to the wars along the imperial border, but the emerging internal borders and ethnic boundaries also fit into these patterns, as we can observe in the next section focusing on the Serbian example.

244 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11101, p. 2. The two brothers were registered in the quarter of Taşköprü where the *konak* is located.

245 HR.SYS. 1452/1, Suret-i Niş kazası dahilinde bulunan çiftlikan, enclosed in: Nicolaidès to foreign minister, Niš, 1/19 April 1880.

4.2 The Serbian Uprising

In 1804, parallel to Pasvantoğlu's rebellion in Vidin and in many ways connected to it, the Christian inhabitants of the *sancak* of Semendire, usually called the Pashalik of Belgrade, initiated an armed struggle against the rule of the local janisaries. This struggle, which lasted until 1813 and was later called the First Serbian Uprising, needs to be examined here in some detail for two reasons. First, in this context the Ottoman government enlisted the help of Hafiz Mustafa to fight the rebels. Thus, the Serbian revolt can serve as a parallel case to demonstrate the rise of the most powerful notable of Niš as agents of the central power. Second, this section will examine the degree to which the Serbian Uprising introduced a new form of territoriality into the political organisation of space in the Ottoman-Habsburg border region. In the nationalist interpretation, the rebels strove to create a territory for all members of the Serbian nation, including the Christian inhabitants of Niš. In contrast, this section seeks to place the Serbian Uprising and its repercussions on Niš in the context of the Ottoman political culture of the warlord *ayans* and their particular territorial behaviour.

The origins of the Serbian Uprising went back to the decade-long struggle between the Ottoman central government and the Belgrade *yamaks*. The government not only wanted to oust the *yamaks* because of their military ineffectiveness, but also because they harmed the Christian peasants who were the main taxpayers in the province. Because of the *yamaks*' land grab in the decades prior to the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1788–91, many peasants had already fled to the Habsburg side of the border.²⁴⁶ During the war, some Christians also participated in the Serbian *freikorps* that were operating under the shield of the Habsburg army in the northern parts of the Pashalik.²⁴⁷ Rebuilding the loyalty of the local Christian population was the main task of Hacı Mustafa's unusually long governorship from 1793 to 1801, which started with the killing of the *yamak* leader in Niš as mentioned earlier. At the beginning of this period, the sultan issued a decree that gave broad privileges to the Christians of the province, mostly concerning taxes and the mode of their collection, and that also offered the private landholdings confiscated from the *yamaks* for sale to the peasants. Moreover, the Christians were allowed to form an armed militia because the governor of Belgrade needed their help against the recurring incursions of the ousted *yamaks*. In 1801, however, despite these measures, the *yamaks* were able to capture the fortress of Belgrade,

²⁴⁶ Tričković, 'Čitlučenje u Beogradskom Pašaluku', 546–549.

²⁴⁷ Slaviša D. Nedeljković and Miloš Z. Đorđević, 'Political Circumstances in the Pashaluk of Belgrade on the Eve of Serbian Revolution (1787–1804)', *Teme* 34, no. 3 (2015): 965–979.

killing the governor together with a number of other officials. The four ringleaders of the attack took the title of *dayı* (*dahiye* in Serbian) and proclaimed Belgrade a 'semi autonomous city' much like Pasvanoğlu's Vidin.²⁴⁸

The new de-facto rulers in Belgrade very soon managed to receive an official pardon because the central government lacked the resources to punish them. Immediately, the *yamak* leaders abolished Christian privileges, stationed soldiers in the countryside to be able to extract additional taxes, and started to expropriate land from Muslim and Christian owners. Opposition against their regime, which came from the side of Muslim landowners as well as Christian notables, was violently suppressed. The murder of around seventy Serbian notables acted as the spark for the general uprising of 1804. Đorđe Petrović (1768–1817), a rich trader in livestock who had gained military experience in the Habsburg army, became the figurehead who united local acts of resistance. In the tradition of famous Ottoman bandits such as Karafeyzi and others, he called himself Karageorge. Quickly, the Christian rebels managed to bring the countryside and the small towns of the Pashalik under their own control, where they persecuted the agents of the Belgrade janissaries, but in some cases also expelled the regular Muslim civilian population.

Opposed to the *yamaks*, the Ottoman central administration looked with some sympathy to the rebellion and planned to use it as a means to regain full control of the border province. The officials in the neighbouring provinces, among them Hafız Mustafa, were ordered to support the rebels, e.g. by providing ammunition. In 1804, the Bosnian governor was sent to re-establish order in Belgrade and managed to have some of the *yamak* leaders executed. Ultimately, however, the fortress remained in the *yamaks*' hands and the governor had to abandon the campaign.²⁴⁹

During this initial phase, the Christian rebels were in constant negotiations with Istanbul, but they also tried to involve the Habsburg Monarchy and Russia as possible guarantors of their demands. Some of the rebel leaders wanted the return of the privileges that the Christians of the Pashalik had enjoyed before 1801; others wanted to extend their autonomy and turn the Pashalik into an Ottoman vassal state with a status similar to neighbouring Walachia. The Ottoman government was troubled by these developments and especially feared the internationalisation of the question, and so made another attempt to get the situation in the province of Belgrade under control. Reports that Christians were also rising

248 Zens, 'In the Name of the Sultan'; Zens, 'Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa'; Aslantaş, *19. Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar*, 55–63.

249 Aslantaş, *19. Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar*, 84–90.

outside its borders and that the rebels were pushing towards the south to conquer Niš called for a speedy reaction.²⁵⁰

Because this time the governor of Bosnia declined, Hafiz Mustafa was given the command to deal with the rebels. His previous reputation of being a loyal servant of the sultan as well as the strategic position of Niš close to the area of conflict must have recommended him to the central government. In April 1805 he was appointed governor (*muhafiz*) of Belgrade with the rank of vizier, and in August he moved north at the head of an army to take control of the province and enforce an order by the sultan for the rebels to lay down their weapons. When he crossed the border of the Pashalik, Hafiz Pasha clashed with the rebels in Ivankovac north of Paraćin and was beaten back under heavy casualties.²⁵¹ Returning to Niš, he died 'either of old age or shame', as Matija Nenadović, a prominent leader on the Christian side, claimed in his memoirs. This was very close to the opinion of the Habsburg ambassador in Istanbul, Stürmer, who stated in one of his reports that Hafiz died of 'grief'.²⁵² These romantic interpretations, which were clearly driven by an orientalist bias, insinuate that it was unthinkable for an Ottoman pasha to lose a battle against a group of rebellious peasants who, on top of that, were Christians. In this interpretation, Hafiz was killed by his own prejudice, small-mindedness and backward thinking.

A very different portrait of Hafiz, although not necessarily a more flattering one, is offered by Stefan Stratimirović, the Serbian Orthodox bishop in Sremski Karlovci (Karlowitz). In the bishop's version of events, Hafiz was charged with ousting the *yamaks* from Belgrade and communicated this to the Christian rebels by the intercession of the bishop of Niš. Secretly, however, he mobilised extra troops and tried to surround the rebels with the intention of murdering their leaders by involving them in feigned negotiations. The Serbs remained suspicious and initiated the battle, which they won. In a rationalistic spirit Stratimirović portrays Hafiz as a player who is outplayed by the Serbs. Correspondingly, his death had nothing metaphysical to it but rather was due to a wound he received in battle.²⁵³

These interpretations of Hafiz Pasha's role are not mutually exclusive. On a tactical level, the *ayan* of Niš had to accept the Christian rebels as a serious force given their military strength. Yet whether he also accepted them as equal players

250 Grégoire Yakschitch, *L'Europe et la résurrection de la Serbie (1804–1834)* (Paris: Hachette, 1907), 70.

251 Aslantaş, 19. *Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar*, 95–99.

252 Matija Nenadović, *Memoari* (Belgrade: Stamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1893), 223; Stürmer to Colorado, Istanbul, 9 November 1806, in Aleksa Ivić, ed., *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva o prvom srpskom ustanku* (Belgrade: Srpska Kraljevska Akad., 1935–1966), 3:191, no. 157.

253 Stratimirović, Sr. Karlovci, 1 Nov. 1806, in: Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*, 3:429–430, no. 317.

in the power game with the same legitimacy as rebels from within the traditional Muslim elite must remain unknown.

While Hafiz Mustafa's role in the Serbian Uprising is largely forgotten today, his successor in dealing with the rebels, Hurşid Ahmed Pasha, is remembered in connection to a gruesome monument: the Skull Tower (Ćele Kula), still a top visitor attraction today, is located on the outskirts of Niš. It is said that the original monument assembled around 900 skulls of Christian rebels from the Belgrade Pashalik who were defeated in a battle with the Ottoman army in the hills north of the city in 1809. Their leader blew himself up together with his men when Ottoman soldiers were about to take his redoubt. The Skull Tower became famous during the nineteenth century when European travellers such as Alexander Kinglake and Alphonse Lamartine were instrumental in reinterpreting it from a monument of warning and shame to one of Serbian national pride. Reportedly, it was the first place the Serbian king visited in 1878, even before entering Niš. A chapel was erected in 1892 to prevent the further disintegration of the tower from which most of the skulls had already gone missing. The site became a monument of Serbian nationalism, memorialising a bitter defeat in a first attempt to liberate Niš. Appropriately, an inscription attached in 1904 drew a parallel to the battle of Kosovo. The Serbian neo-nationalism of the 1980s and 1990s has strongly revived this nationalist interpretation. Today, the Skull Tower is listed as a 'monument of extraordinary importance' among the Cultural Monuments in Serbia.²⁵⁴

Much could be said about the benefits in present-day Serbia of such a monument, which proclaims national unity by using a very original aesthetic and touching on many nationalist tropes such as sacrifice, denial of death, etc. What concerns us here are the implications of the monument for understanding the history of Niš. Today, the monument symbolically claims that Niš has belonged to Serbia since 1809, and possibly even before, if not in a political sense, then at least in the aspirations of its would-be liberators, i.e. the rebels who attacked the city. In this interpretation, their skulls are the material proof that this was not merely a mental geography, but one underlying action, desire and ultimate sacrifice. This claim hinges on a nationalist interpretation of the Serbian Uprising, i.e. that it was the rebels' aim to resurrect Serbia as an independent nation state and a home for all Serbs, including the inhabitants of Niš. However, from the Ottoman perspective, the original Skull Tower conveys a different meaning, which also questions the status of Niš in the national Serbian imagination.

254 Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth, and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 279–280.

In principle, critics have repeatedly questioned the strong nationalist interpretation the Serbian Uprising received beginning in the late nineteenth century. They have demonstrated that at the turn of the eighteenth century, even among the tiny Serbian literate elite, a nationalist ideology that e.g. employed historical references to the medieval empire of the Nemanjić dynasty was not developed at all. At that time, there was not even a clear understanding of how to define 'the Serbs'. On the political field, the contacts between the rebels and other south-Slavic communities who could be made part of a potential national project such as the Montenegrins were tenuous and characterized by political manoeuvring. Instead, this critical approach stresses the rebels' loyalty to the sultan and their strong embeddedness within Ottoman political culture.²⁵⁵

One can count the widespread rejection of a unitary Serbian state among many Christian notables who were the leaders of the rebellion as one sign of the Ottoman character of the Serbian Uprising. The nineteenth century nationalist historian Stojan Novaković attests to the Serbian local notables an 'exaggerated feeling of pride' as well as an 'unrestrained wish to rule unhindered in their home regions.'²⁵⁶ On several occasions during and after the uprising, they revolted against what they perceived as infringements of their local rights by the institutions of the newly founded autonomous Serbian Principality such as the army or the treasury. In this, they were very similar to the Muslim *ayans* in the rest of the Ottoman Empire. For them, these were not legitimate institutions of the nation, but the instruments of Karageorge and Miloš Obrenović, his successor as leader of the rebellion, for realising his ambition to become the sole ruler of the Principality.

An analysis of the rebels' spatial behaviour suggests how slowly their nationalist territorial thinking developed. In summer 1805, the rebels were still consciously avoiding crossing the borders of the Pashalik, e.g. they did not extend their territory towards Paraćin when Hafız Mustafa retreated to Niš. Only in 1806 did they begin to occupy neighbouring territory belonging to the districts and

255 Roger V. Paxton, 'Nationalism and Revolution: A Reexamination of the Origins of the First Serbian Insurrection, 1804–1807', *East European Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1972): 337–362; Wolfgang Höpken, 'Staatlichkeit, Ethnogenese und Kultur: Narrative und symbolische Muster nationaler Identitätskonstruktionen auf dem Balkan im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in *Reiche und Territorien in Ostmitteleuropa: Historische Beziehungen und politische Herrschaftslegitimation*, ed. Dietmar Willoweit and Hans Lemberg (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 410–413; for a historiographical overview see Aslantaş, *19. Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar*, 11–16.

256 Stojan Novaković, *Die Wiedergeburt des serbischen Staates (1804–1813)* (Sarajevo: Selbstverlage des b.-h. Instituts für Balkanforschung, 1912), 84; Paul Hehn, 'Man and the State in Serbia, from the Fourteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Study in Centralist and Anti-Centralist Conflict', *Balkan Studies* 27, no. 1 (1986): 19–21.

provinces of Vidin, Niš, Leskovac, Novi Pazar and Bosnia. As far as the province of Niš was concerned, the rebels occupied the districts of Paraćin, Soko Banja and Aleksinac.²⁵⁷

What status did these places and particularly Niš have in the rebels' imagination? In their numerous negotiations with the Ottomans, they tried to extend their jurisdiction to the places that were in fact under their power. However, in their deliberations with the European Powers, they made more extensive claims to other regions and cities, among them Niš. In 1808 in an exchange with the Habsburgs, Karageorge stated that he would not make peace with the Ottomans 'until Niš and the rest of Serbia had been liberated'. Likewise, the Russian liaison to the Serbs in a letter to his superiors imagined an extended Serbia including Niš, but also places such as Skopje and Novi Pazar.²⁵⁸ Regarding all these cases, the imagined borders were very vague or purely relied on the rebels' factual possessions or strategic considerations and made little reference to a Serbia predefined by historic or current ethnic borders. Yet in the following decades, for intellectuals who formulated Serbian nationalism, Niš was a place that marked the border between lands inhabited by Serbs and by Bulgarians.²⁵⁹ During the uprising, a military logic rather than an ideological one determined the borders the rebels were trying to secure as well as the raids they were conducting. This was also the case with their attack on Niš in summer 1809.

With this attack, hostilities were resumed after a round of negotiations during the year of 1808 in which the new Ottoman sultan, Mahmud II (r. 1808–39), had offered the rebels wide-reaching autonomy. However, Karageorge preferred an alliance with Russia, who had been at war with the Ottoman Empire since 1806 and offered the Serbs full independence. The attack on Niš was planned as part of a combined Serbian-Russian operation against the frontline ranging from Niš via Vidin to Kladovo (Ott. Fethülislam) on the Danube. The Ottomans had fortified this front to prevent the rebels from joining forces with the Russian army, which had occupied Walachia. Because of poor coordination with the Russians, differences between the Serbian commanders and serious supply problems, the attack on Niš ended in a total defeat. Although the rebels had assembled a strong army that camped in the hills north of the fortress, they were not able to cut off the road to Sofia. Hurşid Pasha, who had been named commander-in-chief for the campaign, was able to force them to retreat, inflicting heavy losses of roughly 7,000 on them. His counterattack led him to Požarevac, but the Ottoman army

257 Gaston Gravier, *Les frontières historiques de la Serbie* (Paris: Colin, 1919), 44–66.

258 Ibid., 54.

259 E.g. Demeter Davidovits, *Histoire de la nation Serbe* (Belgrade: Imprimemrie Nationale, 1848).

was not able to score a final victory before the end of the campaign season. This also had to do with infighting between contingents of different *ayans* that were vital to the Ottoman army. Leading up to the end of the uprising in 1813, the rebels conducted another raid on Niš, this time led by Karageorge himself, but as before they were unable to take the fortress and had to retreat after a short while.²⁶⁰

In light of this re-interpretation of the Serbian Uprising and the military operations against Niš, the Skull Tower also appears in a different light. Placed back into its original context, this monument can offer some valuable clues about the Ottomans' relationship to the rebels. By 1809 the initial collaboration between the Ottoman central government and Serbian rebels against the Belgrade *yamaks* had given way to a bitter antagonism. The rebels had overstepped the accepted boundaries of violence in Ottoman political culture, especially with their massacres among the Muslim inhabitants of cities such as Smederevo and Belgrade. What made matters worse was their alliance with Russia, which imported a foreign policy dimension into the conflict, something the Ottoman government wanted to avoid at all costs.

The Ottoman government pursued two strategies to end the uprising: they were constantly negotiating with the Christian rebels to lay down their arms in exchange for autonomy, while at the same time the fighting continued. A military solution was especially difficult because the Ottomans were engaged in a military conflict with Russia. Moreover, it had to employ violence in a measured way in order not to risk the spreading of the rebellion to other parts of the Balkans. In contrast, the rebels would escalate the war and try to carry it beyond the borders of the Pashalik.

Hurşid Pasha's nomination to lead the campaign against the Serbian rebels was indicative of the overall Ottoman strategy. The pasha built his entire career on dealing with rebels against the central government, among them most famously Mehmed Ali of Egypt and Tepedelenli Ali in Ioannina. The Serbian Uprising kept Hurşid occupied for a longer period: in 1806–1807 he had served as governor of Niš; in 1809 he was governor general of the province of Rumelia and commander-in-chief of the army and in 1813 grand vizier, when he was successful in finally stamping out the revolt.²⁶¹

In the handling of the crisis, Hurşid Pasha employed all available means, from negotiations to violence. In 1807 as governor of Niš, he had already sent a report to Istanbul in which he had warned about an imminent revolt among the Christian peasants of the region. As a reaction, the sultan had issued a decree

260 Vladimir Stojančević, 'Niš 1804–1878', in *Istorija Niša*, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 1:266–269; Aslantaş, 19. *Yüzyılın Safağında Balkanlar*, 123–124.

261 Cevdet Küçük, 'Hurşid Ahmed Paşa', in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 18, 395–396.

calling for a just war against them.²⁶² In 1809 Hurşid organised the counterattack on the Serbian forces threatening Niš, and he led the subsequent offensive to the north. These military operations were combined with a strategy of offering a pardon to vanquished enemies such as e.g. 400 Serbian fighters taken prisoner in the battle at Niš. Their excuse that they were pressed to fight in the war by their superiors was accepted and they were set free to spread the news of the sultan's magnanimity.²⁶³ Apparently, Hurşid was criticised for this appeasement policy, especially by the leaders of irregular forces such as Karafeyzi and Kuşancalı Halil Agha who supported the regular army.²⁶⁴ Again, we can see here the different political priorities of the central government and local power holders in dealing with Christian demands.

Hurşid's fight against the Serbian rebels followed a two-pronged approach of suppression and pardon that the Ottoman central government had employed against rebellions of all kinds. Symbolic violence played an important role in this approach. Cutting off the heads of defeated rebels and presenting them to the sultan was a time-honoured Ottoman practice that won the official who was able to deliver this proof of his efficacy promotion and presents in return. In Ottoman Europe at the turn of the eighteenth century, this form of symbolic punishment had grown in proportion with the problems of banditry and rebellions by warlords. Heads became a 'currency' in the 'economy of violence' in which overlapping networks of bandits, discharged soldiers, *ayans* and officials were united in mutual exchanges.²⁶⁵

After the battle at Niš of 1809, the heads of the defeated were cut off, skinned and the flesh stuffed with cotton to be send to Istanbul. This was a widespread practice, which e.g. also Hafız Pasha had employed during his fight against the rebels in 1805. In 1809 the Habsburg ambassador Stürmer duly noticed that the heads of the defeated rebels were displayed in front of the Bab-ı Hümayun, the outer gate of Topkapı Palace, together with the captured Serbian flags.²⁶⁶

But displaying the skulls and assembling them into a tower was definitely not part of the traditional Ottoman repertoire. Either Hurşid Pasha was an innovator, ingeniously doubling the symbolic currency by not only using the skins of the enemies' heads but also the remaining skulls, or alternatively, there was no Skull

262 Aslantaş, *19. Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar*, 116; Enver Ziya Karal, 'The Ottoman Empire and the Serbian Uprising, 1807–1813', in *The First Serbian Uprising, 1804–1813*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1982), 210.

263 Perss to Simbschen, Zemun, 13 June 1809, in Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*, 6:224, no. 243.

264 Stürmer, Istanbul, 25 Oct. 1809, in Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih arhiva* 6:477–478, no. 527.

265 Esmer, 'Economies of Violence', 191–194.

266 Stürmer to Stadion, Istanbul, 25 Aug. 1809, in Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*, 6:317, no. 347.

Tower built by Hurşid Pasha in 1809 from the heads of the fallen soldiers from the Belgrade Pashalik. Indeed, the story has its problems. Most importantly, there seems to be no contemporary news about this gruesome monument. Neither the Austrian ambassador in Istanbul nor the border officials in Zemun who regularly sent spies to Belgrade to record coffee house talk mention a monument like this.²⁶⁷

Furthermore, there are inconsistencies regarding the possible addressees and the location of such a monument. To convey a message to future invaders from the north, 'Look at what awaits you when you cross into Ottoman territory!', the position of the Skull Tower, which was located to the east of Niš on the road to Istanbul, was unsuitable. With five kilometres distance from the city centre, the Christian inhabitants of Niš also did not seem to have belonged to the first addressees. With some exceptions, e.g. an episode in 1821 when the bishop was hanged in front of the fortress, the well-to-do inhabitants as well as the clerical elite seem to have been considered loyal subjects by the Ottomans. As it can be argued that the rebels did not see Niš as part of their potential territory, the Ottomans did not see the inhabitants of Niš as the foremost participants of the rebellion. This leaves the Christian peasants of the surrounding countryside as the intended recipients of the monument's message. We have already mentioned Hurşid's warning about an imminent rebellion among them, but unfortunately, we have no information on whether any peasants from the district of Niš in fact joined the rebels when they marched on the city in 1809.

All of this leaves doubts as to whether there really was a tower built in 1809. One could imagine that the heads of the killed rebels were brought down from the hills to the roadside for skinning and transport to Istanbul. The skulls were left lying in the field until someone later integrated them into a tower. When this happened, who did it and to what purpose requires further research.

The relationship between the Christians of the Belgrade Pashalik and the Ottoman government normalised again after the rebellion was finally crushed in 1813. First, Russia had withdrawn her support to make peace with the Ottomans in 1812 because of Napoleon's imminent invasion. Then, three Ottoman armies under Hurşid Pasha had invaded the Pashalik, defeated the rebels and re-conquered all of the border fortresses, including Belgrade. To entice the thousands of refugees who had crossed the Danube or had hidden in the mountains to return home, a general amnesty was proclaimed. However, it proved hard to re-introduce a regular Ottoman administration; after two years, the Christians of the Pashalik revolted again against the Ottoman governor, who was accused of suppressing

267 At least, I found nothing in Ivanić's abundant collection *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*. Also, the contemporary press seems to be devoid of any news according to my online search: see <https://anno.onb.ac.at>.

the population and seriously overtaxing them. The leader of the second rebellion, Miloš Obrenović (ca. 1780–1860) – Karageorge had fled to Austria and then found asylum in Russia – strictly acted within the confines of Ottoman politics and pleaded for mercy with the sultan. He immediately ended the revolt when the Ottomans offered privileges similar to those the Serbs had enjoyed before their first uprising, and he defended this decision against Karageorge when the latter secretly returned from his exile in 1818. With the consent of the other notables, Miloš had his rival murdered and in good Ottoman tradition, he presented his skinned and stuffed head to the Ottoman governor in Belgrade, who then passed it on to Istanbul.²⁶⁸ Who knows what happened to Karageorge's skull?

4.3 Urban Autonomy and Growth

The political processes that favoured the rise of the *ayans* in Ottoman Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century also had a decisive impact on cities. Together with their elites, cities became more independent from the centre, which sometimes amounted to a sort of autonomy. Parallel to this, it was also a time of economic transformation and population growth, which favoured the rise of the Christian city population. The following section will discuss how the governance, morphology and population structure of Niš changed in this period, taking up the discussion from the previous chapter.

The strong link between *ayans* and cities has already been marked by Albert Hourani, who frequently called them *urban* notables.²⁶⁹ Notables became representatives of their home cities vis-à-vis the central government, and they embellished them with their palaces and founded mosques and charitable endowments.²⁷⁰ This link seems strongest in the Arab centres of the empire where the urban tradition and the memory related to it stretched back to the time before the Ottoman conquest. But the entwined process of rise of notables and a civic consciousness that could amount to urban autonomy is also visible in the cities of Anatolia and the Balkans.²⁷¹ This nexus was first established in the context of negotiations between urban communities and the central government about

268 Aslantaş, 19. *Yüzyılın Şafağında Balkanlar*, 150–164.

269 Albert Hourani, 'Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables', in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Richard L. Chambers and William R. Polk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 41–68.

270 Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 71–75.

271 Christoph K. Neumann, 'Ottoman Provincial Towns in the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (Würzburg: Ergon, 2002), 131–144.

the reduction of special taxes (*avariz*). Such negotiations could reach the character of collective political action when not the central government per se, but its representatives such as governors and other officials were the target. Since the seventeenth century governors had used feigned inspection tours through their provinces to levy extraordinary taxes in cash and kind as a way to maintain their large retinues. To prevent such costly visits to their cities, urban communities could bribe the governor in question or confront him by appealing directly to the central administration. Some cities in Anatolia such as Manisa acquired formal patents (*berat*, *muafname*) issued by the sultan freeing them from housing and maintaining government officials.²⁷²

Cities in Ottoman Europe were also issued privileges and tax exemptions as compensation for services such as securing the border or guarding mountain passes and bridges on the lines of communications of the empire. In addition, some cities gained factual autonomy in times when for a number of reasons, the central power was not present on the ground. As early as the fifteenth century, the city of Sarajevo was issued a patent that made it exempt from supporting government officials. But only in the eighteenth century did the city become autonomous to such a degree that European travellers frequently compared it to the medieval Italian city republics. While Sarajevo was ruled by local *ayans* and janissaries as well as representatives of the guilds, the governors of Bosnia were forced to reside in the nearby town of Travnik. Since the eighteenth century, Mostar, the principal city of the Hercegovina, possessed a similar autonomous status.²⁷³

Cities had to fear attacks by bandits as much as the illegal exactions by governors. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century this became a pressing problem for the urban communities of Ottoman Europe. In this situation, cities that functioned as quasi-capitals of warlords such as Vidin or Ioannina were well protected. Their lords had the necessary manpower to fight bandits or cooperated with them, often employing them for their own goals. In the face of the government's helplessness, other communities were prompted to take their own measures of defence. The Ottoman historian Ahmed Cevdet (1822–95) gives such an example from Lovech (Ott. Lofça), today in north-central Bulgaria. In 1795 when Lofça was threatened by a bandit called Hacı Manav, its inhabitants came together and bound themselves by oath (*ahd ve peyman eylemiş*) to defend

272 İnalçık, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation', 313–322.

273 Muhamed Hadžijahić, 'Die privilegierten Städte zur Zeit des osmanischen Feudalismus: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Privilegien der Stadt Sarajevo', *Südost-Forschungen* 20 (1961): 130–158.

their city. They succeeded in driving the attackers back to the nearby city of Plevna (Ott. Plevna) where the bandits had established their base.²⁷⁴

Cevdet, whose family originated from Lovech, reported this collective action with some pride. However, to cooperate with the bandits rather than to resist them was another option frequently taken by urban communities. In 1797 (1212 AH), being confronted with two armies sent out by Pasvantoğlu to extend his influence to the south, many towns followed this course. We have already seen that this was the choice Hafız Mustafa made when he supported Pasvantoğlu by provisioning his men, blocking government troops coming from the south and refusing government officials entry to Niš. Hafız is not mentioned in Cevdet's account of these events, but it is stated that the people (*ahali*) of Niš acted against the government. This version is not improbable because a *mütesellim* could not take such a far-reaching political decision without public backing. Other towns and cities in the region were in a similar position. The official, who had been ordered by the government to confront Pasvantoğlu's armies but had not been admitted into Niš, had to install himself in the neighbouring town of Pirot (Ott. Şhirköy). To demonstrate their power and as a warning to the people of Pirot, Pasvantoğlu's men plundered a village in the town's vicinity. This demonstration had the desired effect, and the citizens were so frightened that they promised to switch sides and withdrew their support from the government official. He had to fall back on Sofia, where he was not welcome either because the inhabitants had been warned in a letter by Pasvantoğlu not to support the government. Only when other government troops could score a victory over a group of bandits did the people of Sofia start cooperating again, inviting a representative of the government to their city.²⁷⁵

The government seized this moment of success and devoted more troops to the region and successively took back many towns and cities by winter. It had to conquer these places only in exceptional instances as in the case of Nikopol (Ott. Niğbolu) on the Danube halfway between Ruse (Ott. Rusçuk) and Vidin. More often, Pasvantoğlu's men voluntarily abandoned towns such as Plevna and Berkovitsa (Ott. Berkovça). Together with them, those *ayans* who had backed the alliance with Pasvantoğlu left these towns. This gives rare insight into the internal politics of urban communities that were behind decisions to seek an alliance with or oppose the most powerful warlord of the region.²⁷⁶ In spring 1798 this government success resulted in the first siege of Vidin as described above.

274 Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, first ed., vol. 6, 170–171.

275 Ibid., 6:257–258.

276 Ibid., 6:258–262.

Together with the changing modes of governance, in the second half of the eighteenth century, Niš developed from an imperial fortress into a city that still had an important military function, e.g. in the internal revolts discussed above, but was also well integrated into the regional economy and trade. We will first examine the effect this had on city form (fig. 4.2), population and urban life, in particular the co-existence of Muslims and Christians as the two principal religious groups among the inhabitants. Then, the last section of this chapter will focus on the economic transition that was closely connected to new trade routes emerging in the second half of the eighteenth century.

According to a Habsburg spy report, in 1784 Niš was composed of ca. 2,000 houses, which means that the population had grown approximately fourfold since the census of 1710. Moreover, not only had the size of the population grown dramatically, but also the ratio of Muslims to Christians had changed fundamentally. While in the census of 1710 it had been 4:1, now the Habsburg informer estimated that there were equal numbers of Muslims and Christians living in the city.²⁷⁷ Research in historical demography suggests that in all areas of Ottoman Europe, after a decline in the seventeenth century, the Christian population was rising again in the eighteenth century.²⁷⁸ Moreover, when Christian migrants came from the countryside to Balkan cities, in contrast to earlier centuries, they converted to Islam less frequently.²⁷⁹

The altered geo-political and economic position of Niš, and most significantly the population growth, affected the different functional parts of the city to different degrees. While the fortress remained largely unchanged until the end of Ottoman rule, housing government offices and barracks as well as two regular Muslim quarters, the left bank city transformed considerably in its core as well as on its periphery. In 1690 the Habsburg army had built a hornwork as a fortified bridgehead at the place where King Milan Square (Trg krala Milana) is located today. The plans drawn during the Habsburg occupation of 1737 still include it but indicate its dilapidated condition and show no other buildings inside its walls.²⁸⁰ The spy report from 1784 still mentions this bridgehead, too, but remarks that its walls are barely visible, that the moat is filled in at several places and that

277 'Militairische Beschreibung, der Theile Serviens und Bulgariens [...]' in Dušan Pantelić, ed., 'Vojno-geografski opisi Srbije pred Kočinu Krajinu od 1783 i 1784 god.', *Spomenik SKA* 2. Razred 82 (1936): 36.

278 Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 85.

279 Evgeni Radushev, 'The Spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans: Revisiting Bulliet's Method on Religious Conversion', *Oriental Archive* 78, no. 4 (2010): 363–384.

280 'Plan de Nissa', ÖNB, FKB AA 28.1, see <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC04571927>.

the inside now comprises the market (*csarsia*).²⁸¹ The process of abandoning the bridgehead and relocating the central bazaar of Niš from the fortress to this place, starting with the construction of Paša Mosque in 1728, was completed by the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

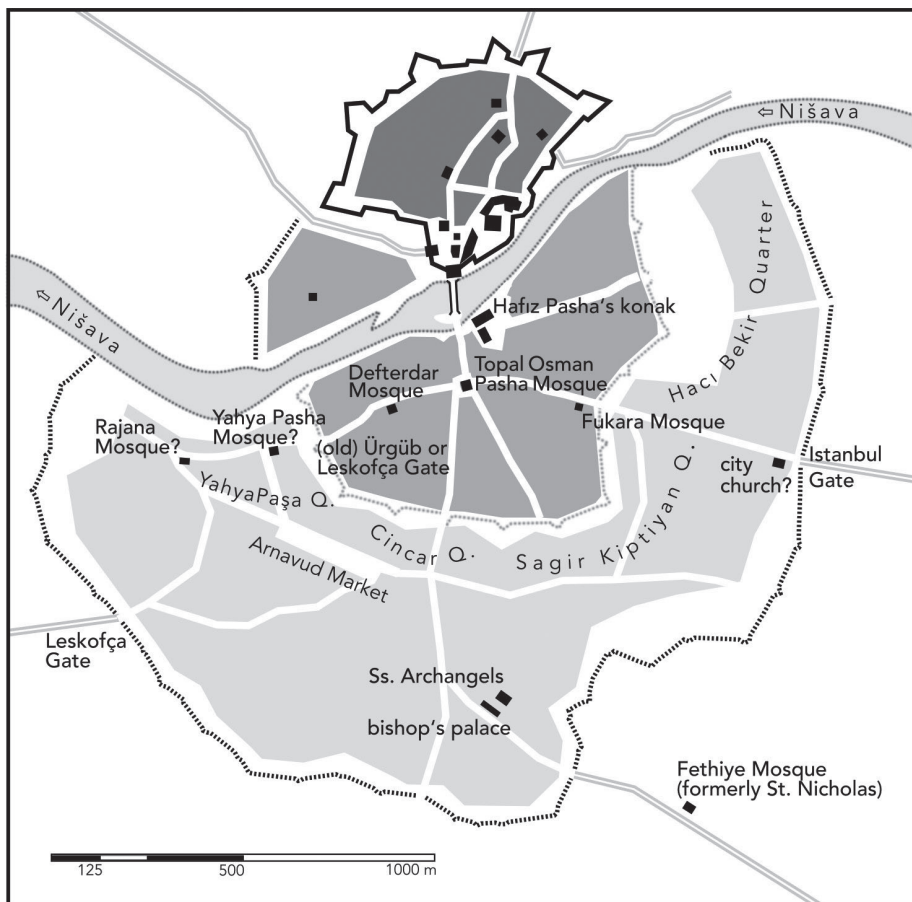


Fig. 4.2: Niš at the turn of the eighteenth century. Map adapted from 'Plan von der Vestung Nissa wie solche Anno 1737 von denen Türcken an die Keyserliche ist übergeben wordern', no author and date, (ÖNB, ALB Port 247–13) and from Feliks Daljković's plan of Niš, 1:4000, March 1878 (OeStA, KA KPS KS G I b, 169-3). Cartography by the author.

281 Pantelić, 'Vojno-geografski opisi Srbije', *Spomenik SKA 2. Razred* 82 (1936), 36.

However, the biggest change happened outside the palisade wall and moat of the left bank city. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, in the first half of the eighteenth century, suburbs had already started to grow along the principal roads leaving the city. When these suburbs densified, they formed a ring around the entire old core of the left bank city. At one stage they were enclosed with a second ring of palisades, but it is not clear when exactly this happened. Possibly, the second ring around the suburbs was constructed during the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1788–91 as a reaction to the conquest of Belgrade by the Habsburgs and the operations of the Serbian *freikorps* along the Istanbul–Belgrade road as far as Aleksinac.²⁸² However, until the end of the Ottoman period the old inner ring of fortifications around the old core also remained visible as a physical boundary. In particular, the moat was not filled in but kept as an open sewer.

The growth of these suburbs is hard to reconstruct; for the Muslim settlement of the suburbs, Radmila Tričković has used the documentation of the pious foundations (*vakfiye*) supporting the mosques that were built in this area.²⁸³ To the west, the old core of the left bank city expanded along the road that left the city at the Ürgüb or Leskofça Gate. In 1764 a new mosque was founded (or renovated) outside the gate by one Hacı Mustafa, which became known as Râjana Mosque after the central Serbian town Ražanj, the donator's place of origin. While we still encounter this mosque in the nineteenth century, a Rajana Quarter is missing from the administrative documents from the Tanzimat period. An attempt to establish a separate quarter must have been not or only temporarily successful. In the nineteenth century, the quarter to the west of the old core was called Yahya Paşa.²⁸⁴ Another development outside the old Ürgüb or Leskofça Gate was the establishment of the Arnavud Çarşısı (Albanian Market), which formed around a khan built in the area after 1718. It remained the most important open market in

282 Slaviša D. Nedeljković, Miloš Z. Đorđević, 'Political Circumstances in the Pashaluk of Belgrade on the Eve of Serbian Revolution (1787–1804),' *Teme* 39 (2015): 969; N.N., *Die Freiwillige Theilnahme der Serben und Kroaten an den vier letzten österreichisch-türkischen Kriegen* (Wien: Keck & Pierer, 1854), 329.

283 Radmila Tričković, 'Urban razvitak Niša u XVIII veku', in *Istorija Niša*, vol. 1, *Od najstarijih vremena do oslobođenja od Turaka 1878. godine*, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 256–261.

284 Tričković thinks that Rajana Mosque changed its name to Yahya Paşa Mosque and that the two are one and the same. However, since both are still listed in a nineteenth century *vakfiye* (EV.d.. 13839, p. 3), we must assume that they were two separate institutions. C.f. Tričković, 'Urban Razvitak', 259. To complicate matters further, a *vakfiye* from 1860 even seems to locate the Rajana Mosque in the Taşköprü neighbourhood. See Jelena Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy: Property in Transition to Nation-State in Post-Ottoman Niš' (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2020), 197.

the city until the First World War. Muslims also began to settle outside of the old core to the east. In 1771 Hacı Bekir Mescid was first mentioned. It still existed in the nineteenth century and was the centre of a quarter with the same name located between the river and the road leading towards Istanbul. The next chapter will present a detailed description of its inhabitants according to the censuses of the 1830s and 1840s.

The area outside the old core in between these two new Muslim quarters, Yahya Paşa in the west and Hacı Bekir in the east, was settled by Christians. As we have seen before, they had already inhabited the southern part of the old core and now expanded outside the wall in the same direction. Since sources such as foundation documents are missing, we know very little about when and how the Christian suburbs developed and whether they were strictly separated from the Muslim quarters at all. The names of two quarters, which are known from nineteenth century sources, might offer a clue as to who settled in parts of the southern suburbs. The quarter immediately outside the old core where the central bazaar street left the inner ring of palisades – today this is approximately at the monument for the writer Stevan Sremac on Obrenovićeva Street – was called the Cincar Quarter. Possibly, this refers to the first settlers of the area, Cincars, the Serbian name for Aromanians or Vlachs, a group of Orthodox Christians speaking a Romance language, who originated from Epirus, Macedonia and southern Albania. As will be discussed in the greater detail in the next section, because of the economic conjuncture of the eighteenth century, many Aromanian workers and merchants settled in cities all over the Balkans. The area east to Cincar Quarter stretching along the inner palisades up to the gate where the road to Istanbul left the old core also bore an ethnonym. It was called Sagir (Little) Kiptiyan in Ottoman, possibly referring to its Roma inhabitants.

The centre of the suburbs was located further to the south of Cincar Quarter. At different times, the bishop's palace, the Christian school as well as the two principal churches of Niš, Ss. Archangels and the Cathedral, both still extant today, were built in this area near one another. It is not clear when the bishops of Niš having their seat in this area began. Possibly, they moved there immediately after they lost their church, St. Nicholas, with its compound in 1738. Only one Habsburg map, which is however very schematic and not dated, indicates the bishop's residence (*Bischöfliche Wohnung*) at the southern edge of the city.²⁸⁵ The same map also shows a church located at the eastern edge of the city, but because it is so schematic the real location is not clear. This is probably the same church as the one that was built as a replacement for St. Nicholas after 1738 and was entered

285 AT-OeStA/KA KPS KS G I b, 169 (sine dato, 1:5000).

on the 'Plan von der Vestung Nissa' as 'Serbian church' exactly at the Istanbul Gate of the fortification enclosing the old core.²⁸⁶ However, this exact positioning may be misleading. While this map clearly used the 1737 *Plan de Nissa* as its basis, it might have been drawn much later, in the second half of the century. Assuming it was produced after the new outer palisades of the left bank city were already in place, possibly the map designer who placed the church according to written or oral testimony 'at the Istanbul Gate' was not aware that the position of this gate had also shifted from the inner to the outer ring of palisades.

Only in the early nineteenth century was the Christian community allowed to build a new church, Ss. Archangels Michael and Gabriel (Crkva Sv. Arhandela Mihaila i Gavрила), close to the bishop's palace. It was built in the manner of a 'sunken' church, i.e. with its ground floor several metres below street level, in order not to violate the restrictions the Ottoman authorities placed on the building's elevation. There is contradicting evidence as to the date of its construction. An inscription on one of the paintings inside the church suggests a date around 1815. According to a Serbian church historian, permission was granted by Hurşid Ahmed Pasha to gain the Christian's support while he was fighting the Serbian Uprising in the neighbouring province of Belgrade.²⁸⁷ This information seems quite credible because it matches with the common strategy of incentives to ensure the loyalty of the Christian subjects that was pursued by Hurşid.

The first Ottoman source referring to Ss. Archangels I could locate is even later. It is a sultanic decree dating from 1819 that granted the repair of the church near the bishop's palace (*ladika konağı ittisalında*). Two official letters attached to this decree refer to a conflict surrounding repairs in previous years.²⁸⁸ According to these letters, some of the Muslim notables (*vücut*) had inspected the two churches of the city by force because they feared that an illegal expansion of these churches was planned. Apart from the fact that at that time the city church was apparently also still in use, this report suggests that in the years before 1819 Ss. Archangels had existed for some time, so it was actually in need of repair. To support their case, the Christian community sent a deputation to Istanbul and brought forward the typical arguments that we also see in similar requests in the same period.²⁸⁹ The

286 'Plan von der Vestung Nissa wie solche Anno 1737 von denen Türcken an die Keyserliche ist übergeben wordern', ÖNB, ALB Port 247–13.

287 Tijana Borić, 'O arhitekturi crkve Sv. Arhandela Mihaila i Gavрила u Nišu (Mali Saborni Hram)', *Niš i Vizantija* 2 (2004): 217–226.

288 HAT 777/36424, doc. A, 5 Rabiulevvel 1234 (2 January 1819) and C, no date.

289 Kemal Beydilli, 'Osmanlı Döneminde Kilise Siyasetinden Bir Kesit: II. Mahmud Devrinde Kilise Tamiri', in *Osmanlı Devlet'inde Din ve Vicdan Hürriyeti*, ed. İslâmî İlimler Araştırma Vakfı (Istanbul: İSAV, 2000), 255–266.

deputation argued that they were not asking for a new church but just wanted to renovate the now-ruined building that had been in use 'from time immemorial'. Since the conquest of the city, the Christians of Niš had been given permission to renovate their church on various occasions, and now the petitioners were asking for this customary right again. Moreover, travelling merchants had reported that in various other cities and villages of the larger region such as Zaječar, Leskovac, Kumanovo, Pazardzhik, Prilep and Breznik, new churches had been built or old ones repaired, and therefore, the Orthodox community of Niš deemed it proper to ask for permission to renovate its church, too.²⁹⁰

Once again, the political circumstances of the Second Serbian Uprising, which broke out in 1815, might offer a clue as to why this petition was granted, despite the previous opposition of the local Muslim community to church renovations. The positive answer should be judged as the repeated attempt to strengthen the loyalty of the Orthodox Church and the Christian inhabitants living close to the rebels' territory. Maraşlı Ali Pasha, who was governor of Niš at the time, was known for his conciliatory stance and diplomatic skills that eventually allowed him to end the revolt by way of negotiations, avoiding a military confrontation. Miloš Obrenović, the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising, declared his loyalty to the sultan and accepted a power-sharing agreement with the Ottomans on his territory.²⁹¹

However, this close alliance between the Ottoman authorities and the Orthodox Church as the representative of the Christians of the city came to an abrupt end in 1821, when both Maraşlı Ali Pasha and Bishop Melentije were executed on order of the central government. When rebellions initiated by the secret society Philiki Hetairia flared up in Moldavia and the Morea, the central government abandoned its policy of cooperation. The bishop of Niš was hanged in front of the fortress for being accused of communicating with Serbian and non-Serbian agitators who were active in the taverns of Niš. The governor's downfall was accelerated by the distrust of the city's Muslims, who had barricaded themselves into the fortress for fear of being attacked by their Christian neighbours. They accused Ali Pasha of privileging the Christian population and allowing them to stock weapons.²⁹²

The next step in the integration of the Christians to the city had to wait several decades and was again expressed by the construction of a new church, the Cathedral (Saborna Crkva) of Niš. The story of this church, which was also located in the immediate vicinity of the bishop's palace and Ss. Archangels, will

290 HAT 777/36424, doc. A, 5 Rabiulevvel 1234 (2 January 1819).

291 Yusuf Hamzaoglu, *Sırbistan Türklüğü* (Istanbul: Logosa, 2004), 236–244.

292 HAT 496/24343, 14 Şaban 1236 (17 May 1821) and HAT 935/40482 25 Şaban 1236 (28 May 1821).

be discussed in chapter 6.2 The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with the economic development of Niš, which was entwined with many of the social, demographic and political trends previously discussed.

4.4 New Trade Routes

While the military role of Niš and its fortress diminished during the 40-year period of peace after 1739, the city reasserted its position as an important stop on the overland route from Istanbul to Belgrade and beyond. This development had already started when Niš became a border city in 1718. Cornelius von den Driesch predicted a shift in the economic relationship of the different cities in the region:

Those who know something about Turkish governance can predict that the loss of Belgrade will effect the total ruin of Sofia. Successively, all trade will be moved from there to Niš, because quite naturally it is more profitable for a country that the border city becomes the main trading place rather than a city further inland, considering the fact that from the border goods can be exported and imported with less cost and on a shorter way.²⁹³

The commercial part of the Treaty of Passarowitz concluded in the same year provided the legal framework for growing trade opportunities: the Habsburg diplomats were able to lower the duties their merchants had to pay in the Ottoman Empire to three per cent, thus abolishing the disadvantage they had compared to French, Dutch and English competitors. As another special privilege Habsburg merchants gained the freedom to trade everywhere in the Ottoman Empire and especially to navigate the Danube (but not the Black Sea) with their own ships. Additionally, the treaty established consular authority for Habsburg merchants and laid down the rules in case of trade disputes.²⁹⁴

As much as it gave Habsburg merchants access to the Ottoman market, the treaty reciprocally gave the same privileges to Ottoman merchants. As a result, the latter only had to pay the fixed import duty and avoided all internal Habsburg customs duties, which still existed until the end of the eighteenth century. Ottoman merchants, who already had acquired a very strong position in trade with Hungary

²⁹³ Gerhard Cornelius von den Driesch, *Historische Nachricht von der Röm. Kayserl. Groß-Botschaft nach Constantinopel* (Nürnberg: Peter Conrad Monath, 1723), 94.

²⁹⁴ Jovan Pešalj, 'Making a Prosperous Peace: Habsburg Diplomacy and Economic Policy at Passarowitz', in *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 141–157.

and Transylvania since the seventeenth century and had formed important trade diasporas there, now became even stronger and were able to establish themselves firmly in Vienna.²⁹⁵

As a diaspora, these Ottoman merchants have attracted a lot of attention in historical scholarship, in particular the Vienna community and its integration into urban society.²⁹⁶ An important source for information about these merchants is the 1766 register of Ottoman subjects in Vienna.²⁹⁷ It gives an insight into the business of 130 registered persons who, for the most part, were established in Vienna as merchants, some of them with their families. The vast majority of them were Orthodox Christians, called Greeks by the Viennese administration, who traded in cotton, red cotton yarn, wool, leather and saffron; most of them came from the region of northern Epirus, southern Albania and Macedonia and were Aromanians, i.e. they originated from an ethnic group that spoke a Romance language. Due to the economic and political circumstances in their home regions, many members of these Aromanian communities had been forced to migrate to other parts of Southeast Europe and beyond, where they worked in all kinds of professions and also as merchants.

The Ottoman merchants in Vienna, protected by the commercial treaty, were very successful and, because with a few exceptions Habsburg products were less attractive to Ottoman customers, the overall trade balance with the Ottoman

295 Vassiliki Seiriniidou, 'Grocers and Wholesalers, Ottomans and Habsburgs, Foreigners and "Our Own": The Greek Trade Diasporas in Central Europe, Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries', in *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Suraiya Faruqi and Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Peeters, 2008), 81–96; Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, 'Economic Relations between the Ottoman Empire and Transylvania in the Sixteenth Century: Oriental Trade and Merchants', in *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa: Perzeptionen und Interaktionen in den Grenzzonen zwischen dem 16. und 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Robert Born and Andreas Puth (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2014), 207–227.

296 David Do Paço, *L'orient à Vienne au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015); Olga Katsiardi-Hering, 'Greek Merchant Colonies in Central and South-Eastern Europe in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in *Merchant Colonies in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Victor N. Zakharov, Gelina Harlaftis, and Olga Katsiardi-Hering (London: Routledge, 2012), 127–140.

297 Polychronēs Kyprianou Enepekidēs, *Griechische Handelsgesellschaften und Kaufleute in Wien aus dem Jahre 1766 (ein Konskriptionsbuch): Aus den Beständen des Wiener Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchivs* (Thessaloniki, 1959); Ferdinand Tremel, 'Die Griechenkolonie in Wien im Zeitalter Maria Theresias. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der österreichisch-türkischen Handelsbeziehungen', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 51, no. 1 (1964): 108–115.

Empire was always in the negative for the Habsburg state.²⁹⁸ Much of this trade in either direction was conducted overland. Although the Habsburg merchants had won the right to navigate the Danube, river transport did not carry much of the volume of trade because shipping was very difficult on the Danube before the regulation of the river, which only started in the nineteenth century. Depending on the goods and their destinations, different overland routes were used, of which only those relevant for Niš will be examined here. Except for interregional trade along the border, Austrian merchants mostly established a connection between the capitals and therefore used the traditional route from Istanbul via Niš to Belgrade.²⁹⁹ Niš became an important entrepôt for Ottoman merchants as well. The export route from the Macedonian production centres ran from Salonica to Belgrade, joining the Istanbul–Belgrade highway at Niš. There was also a parallel route from Salonica via Serres and Sofia continuing either to Vidin or reverting to the Niš–Belgrade route. Especially during Napoleon’s Continental Blockade from 1806 to 1814, this latter route saw a lively trade with British colonial goods towards Central Europe. In practical terms, goods were transported by large caravans of packhorses of up to one thousand animals that each carried two packages of 50 kilograms. It took 35 days of travelling time plus 28 days of quarantine at the border at Orşova for them to reach Vienna.³⁰⁰

Because of these new trade connections, by in the first decade after the Treaty of Passarowitz, the revenue of the Niš customs increased from 15,000 in 1718 to 25,725 *kuruş* by 1731. That this trade became even livelier after the interruption of the war of 1737–39 is shown by the fact that the local authorities also wanted a share of the profits. In 1745 the office of the head of the guild of cart drivers (*arabacı başı*) was created and leased to a janissary, who demanded a fee from the merchants transporting goods from Niš to Belgrade. These merchants protested that the office holder did nothing but hinder their business.³⁰¹

Other members of the Belgrade janissary garrison, among them Hafız Mustafa’s father, acted as merchants themselves. From among the thirteen Muslim

298 Traian Stoianovich, ‘The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant’, *Journal of Economic History* 20, no. 2 (1960): 259–263; Adolf Beer, *Die österreichische Handelspolitik unter Maria Theresia und Josef II.* (Vienna: C. Gerold’s Sohn, 1898), 33–35, 83–86.

299 Numan Elibol and Abdullah Mesud Küçükaly, ‘Implementation of the Commercial Treaty of Passarowitz and the Austrian Merchants, 1720–1750’, in *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao, Nikola Samardžić, and Jovan Pesalj (Purdue University Press, 2011), 166.

300 Henry Holland, *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia, etc. during the Years 1812 and 1813* (London: Longman, 1815), 323–326; also see A.B. Cunningham, ‘The Journal of Christophe Aubin: A Report on the Levant Trade in 1812’, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 8 (1983): 105–111.

301 Tričković, ‘Niš u XVIII veku’, 217, 226.

merchants in the 1766 register of Ottoman subjects in Vienna, six were born in Alaiye and we can assume from the titles they used such as Emir and Molla as well as from their statements that some of them were janissaries. Two of them gave Alaiye, two Belgrade, one Vidin, but six Istanbul as their residence. All except for one stated that they entered Austria on the land route via Zemun (Germ. Semlin).³⁰² It is evident that some of these merchants belonged to the same network of Alaiye janissaries from which Hafiz Mustafa's father originated. One of the Viennese merchants even stated that one of his partners was from the Twelfth Regiment, to which the *mütesellim* of Niš also belonged.

In general, the Ottoman authorities, the local *ayans* and warlords were supportive of this trade because they could collect fees and bribes from the merchants. It is said especially about Osman Pasvantoğlu that he protected merchants who operated from his territory or crossed it. He also used local merchants for political missions because of their contacts in Vienna, Moscow and Paris.³⁰³ Even the Christian rebels of the Pashalik of Belgrade showed an interest in keeping the trade goods flowing. At the beginning of the First Serbian Uprising in 1805, the *yamaks* who held Belgrade had disturbed trade by opening the business letters of the merchants. Therefore, the rebels offered these merchants an alternative route bypassing Belgrade to the west and also involved the Habsburg authorities of the Slavonian Military Frontier in Zemun and Petrovaradin (Germ. Peterwardein) in these negotiations.³⁰⁴ Later, the Serbs also negotiated with the Ottoman side to keep the road open for traffic and trade. For a share of the customs duties, they offered to guarantee the safety of the merchants and run the service infrastructure of khans on their way between Niš and Belgrade. One Emir Agha from Niš, as the representative of the Ottoman side, concluded a treaty with the rebels regulating customs, to be paid in Paračin.³⁰⁵

The relation between power and trade was more ambivalent in Epirus, Macedonia and Albania. One of the most important trading cities of the region, Moschopolis, was destroyed and depopulated almost completely after three

302 Numan Elibol, 'XVIII. Yüzyılda Avusturya Topraklarında Faaliyet Gösteren Osmanlı Tüccarları', *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15 (2004): 75–76.

303 Rossitsa Gradeva, 'Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin: Between Old and New', in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2006), 140–143.

304 Anon., Zemun, 4 Apr. 1805 in Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*, 2:86, no. 68; P. Demeter Czigco, Demeter Costa Skoiro, Constantin Zigury, Zemun 17 Apr. 1805, in Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*, 2:90–92, no. 72; Geneyne, Petrovaradin, 24 Apr. 1805, in Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*, 2:95–98, no. 76.

305 Anon. report, Petrovaradin, 25 Aug. 1808, in Ivić, *Spisi Bečkih Arhiva*, 5:926, no. 682; Novaković, *Die Wiedergeburt des serbischen Staates*, 72.

bandit attacks in 1769, 1772 and 1789. The last one was initiated by Ali Pasha of Ioannina, who otherwise encouraged trade on his own territories.³⁰⁶

The Ottoman wholesale merchants who dominated trade with Central Europe from the second half of the eighteenth century until it began to cease after 1815 were organised as family firms with branches in the principal towns and cities along the trade routes such as Budapest, Zemun and Belgrade, Vidin, Serres and Salonika. They cooperated with smaller merchants and forwarding agents called *speditori* who organised the flow of goods through their respective towns and cities. The *speditori* ensured the safe and speedy passage of goods, organised storing and lodging facilities or dealt with local officials in case of problems.³⁰⁷

The Sina family, one of the leading families of merchants, bankers, and industrialists of Austria in the first half of the nineteenth century, can serve as a good example for the role of Niš in this network of cities. Georg Sina, a merchant from Moschopolis in southern Albania, engaged in trade with Austria, where he lived during the 1760s. His son and the founder of the family fortune, Simon Georg Senior (1753–1822), had been born in Moschopolis from whence the family fled in 1769 to Niš after the first looting of the city. In Niš, his first son, Simon Georg Junior (1782–1856), was born before the family moved to Vienna, probably after 1788 when Simon Georg Senior founded his first firm with two partners.³⁰⁸

The Sinas and other wealthy merchant families were part of a larger system of labour migration that connected many parts of Southeast and Central Europe, which also comprised forwarding agents, cart drivers, muleteers and innkeepers. Many local communities were integrated into this system, particularly those from mountainous regions of the Balkans like the Aromanians. There was a natural connection between the mobile life of Aromanian transhumant shepherd communities and their involvement in trade and labour migration. Seasonal labour migration, called *gurbet* in Turkish or *pečalbarstvo* in South Slavic, constituted a particular form of mobility in which many Aromanian village communities also partook.³⁰⁹ The men of the village usually spent the spring and summer months

306 Frederick F. Anscombe, 'Albanians and "Mountain Bandits"', in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830*, ed. id. (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2006), 99–100.

307 Apostolos Euangelou Vakalopoulos, *History of Macedonia, 1354–1833* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1973): 386.

308 Amelie Lanier, *Die Geschichte des Bank- und Handelshauses Sina* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), ch. II.3, quoted from <https://www.alanier.at/Baumwolle.html>.

309 Michael Palaret, 'The Migrant Workers of the Balkans and Their Villages (18th Century–World War II)', in *Handwerk in Mittel- und Südosteuropa: Mobilität, Vermittlung und Wandel im Handwerk des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Klaus Roth (München: Otto Sagner, 1987), 23–46.

abroad before returning home with their earnings. Typical destinations were the Ottoman capital of Istanbul, but also the northern regions along the Danube. Aromanians from specific villages in the region described above worked as itinerant tinkers and wood carvers, but most famously as construction workers who built houses and churches throughout the Balkans, for example, the churches of Niš, as we will see in greater detail in chapter six.³¹⁰

Of the different groups and individuals that the rising trade opportunities in the second half of the eighteenth century connected to Niš, only the very elite like the Sinas left traces in the records. Only in the period after 1830s, when the Ottoman government initiated a registration of the entire city population, did such population movements become more transparent. The next chapter will focus on this source material in greater detail in an attempt to make the political and social processes of the eighteenth century that we have discussed so far visible and quantifiable.

310 Dušan J. Popović, *O Cincarima: Prilozi pitanju postanka našeg građanskog društva* (Belgrade: Prometej, 2008, first ed. 1937), 138–148.

5 The Contours of an Urban Society

The Historical Archive of Niš is housed in a former building of the Yugoslav People's Army inside the fortress. It was founded as an institution around 1900, and therefore records of its systematic holdings only start with documents the local Serbian administration began producing in the 1890s.³¹¹ Apart from some random Ottoman documents such as tax receipts that found their way into the archive from private collections, the rich body of files of the nineteenth-century local Ottoman administration are not available. When the Ottoman army evacuated Niš in 1878, these files together with the records of the local *kadı* court were destroyed or removed and lost later. However, because of the centralised nature of Ottoman administration, wherein procedures were initiated in the centre and decisions at the local level were reported in detail back to Istanbul, we have some knowledge of the local bureaucrats' work. This is also the case for the censuses of the 1830s and 1840s, one of the most important sources for the population structure of Niš. The Ottoman section of the Turkish state archives in Istanbul preserves these documents, which this chapter will analyse in detail.

After the central government in Istanbul had regained direct control over the core provinces in Rumelia and Anatolia during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1807–39), it sought to exploit the empire's resources more efficiently. Therefore, it created new institutions and restructured the internal boundaries of society – a policy that will be in the focus of the next chapter. At the beginning, however, stood a process of information gathering. In the 1830s and 1840s the Ottoman government initiated a series of censuses and surveys in support of military and financial planning. These censuses were to ascertain the number of available soldiers, who were recruited exclusively from among the Muslim population. The first modern Ottoman census dating from 1830 was to assist in the reconstruction of the army after the abolition of the janissaries in 1826 and the Russian-Ottoman war of 1829. Census officials were sent out by the government to collect data in

311 See their website at <https://www.arhivnis.rs/Arhiv/Arhiv.html>.

the core provinces in Anatolia and Rumelia and reported back to a newly-founded Ministry of Information (Ceride Nezareti).³¹² Other censuses of this period were to reveal the tax base of the empire. The poll tax (*cizye*), which was levied on the sultan's non-Muslim subjects, provided an especially important amount to the state budget.

In contrast to the censuses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, called *tahrir*, that had focused on land, its revenues and the people who worked it, now, the individual subject as a potential soldier and/or taxpayer was at the centre of attention. Unlike the older models, the nineteenth-century censuses followed up on attempts to register and thereby control undesirable populations as e.g. migrants and vagrants that had been first tried in late eighteenth-century Istanbul. These surveys were conducted regularly only for a short period in the 1790s at the beginning of Selim III's reign and were restricted to the Ottoman capital. However, they prefigured a new approach to governance that would fully crystallise only towards the end of Mahmud II's reign.³¹³

From the perspective of the history of the modern state, the Ottoman endeavour at the beginning of the nineteenth-century reform period can be described as statistics in its eighteenth and nineteenth-century meaning, i.e. measuring and describing the resources of the state.³¹⁴ As many statistics in eighteenth-century Europe focused on describing 'human resources', Michel Foucault in his study on governmentality concluded that the population was established as the principal aim of an evolving new understanding of government. He conceived this shift towards 'bio-politics' as a shift away from governments' earlier attention to territory.³¹⁵ This dichotomy has been questioned by Stuart Elden, who has extensively reconstructed the discourse of territory from Antiquity to the early modern period. In his understanding, territory evolved in parallel to population as a key concept and aim of government. Both were constituted by the same political

312 In the literature, this census is sometimes known as the census of 1831 because the data from the provinces was compiled in Istanbul the following year. See Musa Çadırcı, '1830 Genel Sayımına Göre Ankara Şehir Merkezi Nüfusu Üzerinde Bir Araştırma', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 1, no. 1 (1980): 112. Also see Kemal H. Karpat, 'Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82–1893', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 2 (1978): 237–274; Stanford J. Shaw, 'The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831–1914', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 3 (August 1978): 325–338.

313 Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century: Between Crisis and Order* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 4–5; 110–113.

314 Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood: Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

315 Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: Cours au Collège de France, 1977–1978* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 91–118 (lecture on 1 February 1978).

techniques such as mapping, registering, counting, etc.; both concepts are ‘inherently intertwined. Populations are defined, in part, by their location, and territories, in part, by their inhabitants.’³¹⁶

The censuses to be analysed in the following will demonstrate this connection of population and territory as a technique of government on many occasions. On an urban micro level, censuses can be efficient instruments of control to the extent that they can fix the location of the registered. We will see that for this purpose, they were integrated with other bureaucratic mechanisms of controlling the movement of Ottoman populations. On a macro level, a countrywide census enabled comparisons between the different regions of the empire. It can be seen as a step supplementing the homogenisation of provincial administration and its territorial structure – a process that will be in the focus of chapter 6.3.

For Niš, the first surviving census documents in the nineteenth century date from 1832/33 (1248 AH), consisting of several booklets (*defter*) that group the male city population according to their religion. These booklets were probably compiled from the census data of 1830 for the use of the local official, called the *defter nazırı*, who was responsible for the registration of the population. In fact, the registers at hand were updated for several years by adding relevant information concerning the registered persons, e.g. when they died or moved from the city, and also by entering newborns as well as immigrants for roughly five years after the first date of compilation.

The first section of this chapter will examine these census documents, which provide the first enumeration of the city population following the *kadı* register of 1710. At certain intervals the government launched new registration campaigns, e.g. in 1840 (1256 AH) for the Muslim part of the population, with direct reference to the ‘requirements of the Tanzimat’.³¹⁷ Yet another new census was executed in 1845 (1261 AH) for the Muslim inhabitants of Niš, and in the following year, for the Christians as well.³¹⁸ Some of these surveys added new information such as the professions of the registered male population.

In 1845 the government also embarked on a campaign to establish the tax base of the empire more precisely to be able to implement a new system of taxation as it had promised to do in the reform edict of 1839. The second section will present

316 Stuart Elden, ‘How Should We Do the History of Territory?’, *Territory, Politics, Governance* 1, no. 1 (2013): 17.

317 ‘Tanzimat-i hayriye iktizasınca’, NFS.d.. 6007, p. 2. There is another copy of the same census dated 1843 (1259): NFS.d.. 6008. For the Christians, apparently, there was not a new census in 1840, but a copy of the 1248 register book cleared of those who had died or moved away was used. See NFS.d.. 6003.

318 See NFS.d.. 6009 for the census of Muslims and ML.VRD.CMH.d... 653 for the Christians.

this Survey of Wealth (*temettuat*), which was conducted in many cities of Anatolia and Rumelia and is a gold mine of information regarding the socio-economic situation of their inhabitants.³¹⁹ Despite its problematic value as a source – it relied entirely on self-claims by the taxpayers – this survey can provide a unique insight into the property structure and economic activities of certain parts of Niš, i.e. real property such as fields, gardens, houses and shops, and animal stock as well as income from labour and rents.

By examining these sources, this chapter will present an extrapolated picture of Niš at the beginning of the Ottoman reform period. It will follow the sources in dividing the city population into religiously defined groups. However, we should keep in mind that this was a *prima facie* administrative division. From here, a critical reflection about the question of internal boundaries in urban society will have to follow. By breaking down this topic to the issue of segregation vs. mixity in Ottoman cities, the last section will attempt to tackle the question of urban boundaries.

Although modern statistical methods have recently been applied very successfully on the field of historical demography of Ottoman cities,³²⁰ this chapter pursues a more pedestrian approach. It aims at painting an impressionistic picture of Niš, which can provide the demographic and socio-economic background to many of the questions that have been treated so far and will be in the focus in the remainder of this study. The Ottoman bureaucracy who compiled the censuses also never used them for social statistics in the modern sense. Like in other parts of Europe, statistics still had largely descriptive purposes and were not yet translated into data for mathematical operations.

319 Kayoko Hayashi and Mahir Aydın, eds., *The Ottoman State and Societies in Change: A Study of the Nineteenth Century Temettuat Registers* (London: Kegan Paul, 2004).

320 Nikolai Todorov, *The Balkan City, 1400–1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 309–453; more recently see Bašaran, *Selim III*; Yunus Ugur, ‘The Historical Interaction of the City with Its Mahalles: Ottoman Edirne in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries’ (PhD thesis, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 2014) and Erdem Kabadayı’s ERC project UrbanOccupationsOETR.

5.1 The First Censuses

In the registers of the 1832/33 (1248 AH) census,³²¹ the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Roma (*kıpti*) male inhabitants of Niš are recorded separately with their names and father's names as well as a stylised physical description, which mentions hair and beard colour as well as stature as the most distinctive features. Because they served different administrative purposes, the registers for each community vary slightly. The register book for the Muslims³²² clearly betrays a military purpose by also listing conditions that marked the person as unfit for military service, e.g. if they were lame (*topal*), had only one hand or arm (*çolak*) or only one eye (*yek çeşm*), or were considered mentally ill (*mecnun*). Besides information on 1,846 individuals, the register also provides contextual information on the city such as the names of the nine quarters.

In each quarter, the first entry usually concerns the imam of the mosque of the quarter, who had many important administrative functions in the Ottoman city.³²³ In five quarters, the imam also acted as *muhtar*, i.e. the official warden, while in the other quarters it was the second imam or the muezzin who held this office. The central government had created the office of the *muhtar* first in Istanbul and, since 1833, also in the provinces to open an independent channel to the local population. The example of Niš seems to confirm that it was not so much the influence of the religious authorities that the government wanted to circumvent, but that of other local forces such as the *ayans*. The *muhtar*'s main task was to handle issues of local security: he had to check on people who were new to the neighbourhood and had to issue identification documents for people who wanted to travel. Moreover, the warden was responsible for keeping the population registers of his quarter as well as the account books where the distribution of certain taxes was recorded.³²⁴ Comparing the census of 1832/33 with later data, we see the office of *muhtar* slowly evolving. In the census of 1840/41 (1256 AH), instead of the imam acting as *muhtar*, six quarters already had a full-time *muhtar*.³²⁵

Besides the imams, the first census also marked other religious officials such as the mufti and the muezzins of the various mosques as well as the four resident sufi

321 Collected in BOA, NFS.d.. 6001, 6002, 6004, and 6005.

322 'Nefs-i Niş'te mevcut olan sagir ve kebir ahal-ı İslam'ın zukurlarının defteridir sene 1248', NFS.d.. 6001.

323 Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İhyas Mahlle* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 65–72. However, not all imams were living in their own quarters.

324 Musa Çadırcı, 'Türkiye'de Muhtarlık Teşkilatının Kurulması Üzerine Bir İnceleme', *Belleten* 34, no. 135 (1970): 409–420.

325 NFS.d.. 6007, 1–26.

sheikhs, one Nakşibendi, one Kadiri and two Sadi. Likewise, the local *nakibüleşraf*,³²⁶ the representative of the descendants of the Prophet (*seyyid*), a group with tax privileges, is singled out in the register book. Likewise, other local officials such as scribes in the court, the keeper of the population records (*deFTER nazırı*), a registrar (*mukayyid*) supporting him as well as the gatekeeper of the fortress, the storehouse keeper (*anbar emini*) and several post riders (*tatar*) are mentioned. From among the local elite, Mahmud Pasha's brother, Elhac Ali bin Mustafa, was singled out because of his rank of *dergah-ı ali kapıcıbaşı ağası*. Although it was not explicitly mentioned, this might signify that he held the office of the district *ayan*.

The census of 1840/41, which also contains information on professions, adds to this list of local officials. From the side of the military, a superintendent of the arsenal (*cephane nazırı*) is now mentioned. Another office that demonstrates a further step in the centralisation policies is that of the public treasurer (*sandık emimi*). The central government had introduced this office to replace the district *ayan* or his representative the *tahsildar*, who was responsible for supervising the collection of extraordinary taxes and expenses of the district. Such treasurers were introduced empire-wide in 1839, but e.g. in Bitola (Ott. Manastır), the office existed as early as 1833.³²⁷

The *sipahis* form another group that reflects changes in the structure of Ottoman elites due to the government's reforms. In the past, they were an important pillar not only of the Ottoman cavalry, but also of provincial administration. To the extent that they lived in the district centres, they can also be considered a part of the urban elite. In the seventeenth century, the government started to convert many of their *timars*, i.e. their prebendal landholdings, into tax farms because the *sipahis*' military value had decreased in an era of firearms and armies consisting mainly of infantry. Beginning from the late eighteenth century, in the course of military reforms, the government was keen to phase out the institution before it was altogether abandoned at the beginning of the Tanzimat period. Many *timars* were not given out again after the death of a *sipahi*.³²⁸

In Niš, the first census of 1832/33 still mentions a relatively large group of about 60 *sipahis*. The fact that some of them were children shows that the *timars* were passed on within the family. Some of those *sipahis* resident in Niš had their *timars* in the *sancak* of Semendire, i.e. the Belgrade Pashalik, and were assigned to do service in the fortress of Belgrade; some also came from the *sancak* of Alacahisar

326 Yücel Özkaya, *18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Toplumı*, sec. ed. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 233–234.

327 Michael Ursinus, *Regionale Reformen im Osmanischen Reich am Vorabend der Tanzimat* (Berlin: Schwarz, 1982), 213–259.

328 Halil İnalıcık, 'Timar', *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* 41 (2012), 168–173.

(Serb. Kruševac), a town 75 km to the north-west of Niš. These *sipahis* from the northern *sancaks* lost their land and privileges at exactly the period of the first census. Between 1830 and 1833, the Pashalik of Belgrade, which had enjoyed a limited autonomy since 1815, was recognised as the Serbian Principality by the Ottoman government. At the same time, it was enlarged by six border districts, among them Kruševac. It is possible that the *sipahis* from Semendire and Alacahisar were part of the wave of Muslims that left the Pashalik of Belgrade and the six districts immediately after 1830. The changing status of their home regions implied that all *timars* were abolished and the Christian peasants became owners of the land. Muslims had to evacuate all villages and small towns in the principality and were allowed to live only in a handful of fortress cities such as Belgrade and Šabac (Ott. Böğürdelen) on the river Sava.³²⁹

In the 1840/41 census, six former *sipahis* from the *sancak* of Semendire were still registered in Niš. Although they had de facto lost their privileges, they still received compensation payments for their lost titles.³³⁰ The number of *sipahis* in this census had fallen to thirteen individuals. Probably, the government had already started a policy of phasing out their *timars* before the system was formally abandoned in 1844. At least in one case, a former *sipahi* was integrated into the newly-created Ottoman army, appearing as a cavalryman (*asakir-i mansure-i süvarisi*) in the second census.³³¹ However, the institution did not vanish immediately. There is evidence that the Ottoman Treasury paid stipends in lieu of the income of *timars* to ex-*sipahis* residing in Niš until the 1870s. While some were refugees from the former *sancak* of Semendire collecting their compensation, it seems that others still held titles to former *timars* in the district of Niš. According to Jelena Radovanović, who analysed this situation in detail, the Ottoman government continued to support the former *sipahis* because they were considered important to bolster the presence of Muslims in the strategic border province.³³²

The military was an important component of a fortress city such as Niš, although most members of the garrison probably were not registered as inhabitants of the city. Of those locals occupied in the Ottoman military, with 13 members registered in the census of 1840/41, the members of the new forces, the Asakir-i Mansure, which Sultan Mahmud had created as a substitute for the

329 Yusuf Hamzaoglu, *Sırbistan Türklüğü* (Istanbul: Logosa, 2004), 283–299.

330 This becomes clear in the *temettuat* survey in 1845, in which *timar reyi* (revenue of timar) makes up a considerable amount of the fortunes of these former sipahis. See e.g. ML.VRD. TMT.d... 11101, p. 5–6.

331 NFS.d.. 6001, p. 13, no. 223; NFS.d.. 6007, p. 19, no. 29.

332 Jelena Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy: Property in Transition to Nation-State in Post-Ottoman Niš', (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2020), 30–34.

janissaries, were rather insignificant. But there was a larger group of 37 unspecified soldiers called *sekbân*. By far the biggest urban group from the military were the artillerymen (*topçu*), whose members constituted approximately 20 per cent of the male Muslims of the city population. It becomes clear from the census of 1840/41 that approximately 30 percent of these artillerymen, including some of the non-commissioned officers such as corporals (*onbaşı*) and lieutenants (*mülazım*), were not employed full-time, but also had a civilian job.

A special part of the first census deals with Muslim immigration to Niš, opening a window on regional population flows.³³³ It records 35 Muslims who settled in the city between one month and eight years previously. The majority of them came from the Danube region, from Vidin or further away from Varna, Braila (Ott. *İbrail*) and Tulcea (Ott. *Tulçı*).

The first census of 1832/33 also undertook a registration of the Christian and Jewish inhabitants of Niš, but obviously not for the use of the military. According to the preamble of the register, it was to determine the number of poll tax payers in three levels of high (*ala*), middle (*evsat*) and low (*edna*) and reclassify those who had lost their poll tax certificates.³³⁴ Unlike the Muslims' register, that for the Christians provides little additional information. The 3,808 individual entries are grouped in one block, described as 'those living in the *varoş*' with no further differentiation into subunits such as we will encounter in later poll tax registers. Official functions and professions are also rarely marked. The list starts with the bishop's deputy (*ladika vekili*) as the highest-ranking inhabitant who was liable to pay taxes. Among the registered Christians were eight priests (*papa*). One of them, like some other individuals in the list, had been awarded a tax exemption certificate (*muaf tezkeresi*).

Furthermore, a group of 38 individuals (including some children) are singled out as Europe Merchants (*Avrupa tüccarları*). They were resident in the city, but not liable to pay the poll tax.³³⁵ Europe Merchants constituted a special class of traders the Ottoman government had created in the beginning of the nineteenth century. For a fee, non-Muslim merchants could be issued a patent (*berat*) by the Ottoman government that gave them certain tax privileges and the right to pay reduced customs duties. With this measure the government intended to counter the widespread practice by European states of taking Ottoman merchants under their protection and awarding them the privileges originally intended for

333 'Nefs-i Niş ve kazasının ahir kazalarından gelip iskan eden ahal-ı İslam ve ahal-ı zimmet-i reayaları ol... sagir ve kebirlerinin defteridir. Sene 48', NFS.d..6004.

334 'Nefs-i Niş ve kazasının mevcut olan sagir ve kebir ahal-ı zimmet reayalarının defteridir. Sene 48', NFS.d.. 6002.

335 NFS.d.. 6002, 75.

European nationals. The institution of the Europe Merchant existed until the 1860s and was quite successful, at least in certain cities of the empire. While the corps of Europe Merchants was dominated by Greek traders from Istanbul, in the course of the nineteenth century, the number of merchants from the Balkans was increasing steadily.³³⁶ The next section about the social and economic structure of the population will present this elite from within the Christian community of Niš in greater detail.

Finally, the 1832/33 census lists the members of the Jewish community. Starting with the chief rabbi (*hahambaşı*), it consisted of 178 male individuals including children.

A separate list was compiled for the Muslim and Christian Roma (*kıpti*).³³⁷ They were combined in one register because both were liable to pay the poll tax but only at the lowest level (*edna*). This list does not give any additional information on the Roma communities and only records its 357 Muslim and 30 Christian members. Only with the help of later censuses can we get more information on this sizeable urban population, which was, as we have seen, an established part among the inhabitants at least since the eighteenth century and continued to play a role after Niš had become a part of Serbia.³³⁸

In sum, the two censuses of 1832/33 (1248 AH) and 1840/41 (1256 AH) offer an overview of the city population of Niš at the beginning of the reform period. With roughly 6,200 male inhabitants, the city was still relatively small; its population was 61 per cent Christian, 36 per cent Muslim and three per cent Jewish. In contrast to the beginning of the eighteenth century, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants lived in the left-bank city, while only five per cent of the civilian population settled inside the fortress. In addition to the two Muslim quarters inside, there were seven Muslim quarters outside the fortress. The administrative units of the Christian community were not recorded in these first censuses. To the degree that the central government was interested in the city population mainly for military and fiscal reasons, this picture remains very abstract. Only in some instances does the administrative structure to govern these populations and their officials become apparent in the registers. For a more detailed insight, especially into the social and economic situation of the inhabitants, additional data is necessary. This was collected in a series of censuses in the 1840s, on which the next section will focus.

336 Bruce Masters: 'The Sultan's Entrepreneurs: The *Avrupa Tüccaris* and the *Hayriye Tüccaris* in Syria', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 579–597.

337 'Nefs-i Niş ve kazasının mevcut olan sağır ve kebir kıptiyanın defteridir. Sene 48', NFS.d., 6005.

338 Nenad Jašić, *Stari Niški Romi* (Nish: KSS, 2001).

5.2 Property and Urban Economy

After the proclamation of the Tanzimat as the official political program of the empire in 1839, the government redoubled its efforts of information gathering, especially to establish a new tax system on an empirical footing. High and unjust taxes were a key issue in public opinion, causing much dissatisfaction, protest and in some instances violent opposition as in the case of the tax revolt by Christian peasants in the district of Niš in 1841, which chapter 6.1 will examine. On this background, in 1845, the government initiated the Survey of Wealth (*temettuat*) among its subjects in the core provinces of the empire in Anatolia and the Balkans.

There are several caveats to keep in mind when analysing the records of this survey of the population's wealth and income.³³⁹ Most importantly, the information provided relied on self-claims by the taxpayers who probably severely under-reported their taxable income. Moreover, certain forms of wealth and income, for example, cash or receivables, were not recorded at all. The value of the houses the registered individuals were living in also went unrecorded, which makes an analysis of the urban property market difficult. Secondly, there were irregularities in the process of compiling the registers. Because the same data was not recorded in all provinces and districts, they lack uniformity. Thirdly, the survey of wealth and income remains singular in the nineteenth century; after many difficulties and much resistance, the Ottoman financial bureaucracy went back to the traditional method of tax assessment, i.e. by estimation and did not pursue a follow-up to the survey of 1845. Lastly, there is a problem with preservation. As in many other cases, the registers from the Wealth Survey for the city of Niš are also not preserved completely. In the Ottoman archive, I could locate the registers of six Muslim quarters and twenty Christian quarters and smaller administrative units within the city, many of which are incomplete with pages missing.³⁴⁰

339 Yoichi Takamatsu: 'Ottoman Income Survey (1840–1846)', in *The Ottoman State and Societies in Change: A Study of the Nineteenth Century Temettuat Registers*, ed. Kayoko Hayashi and Mahir Aydın (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), 15–46.

340 These are for the Muslims ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11036 (Defterdar Mah.), 11059 (Cedid Mah.), 11082 (Hünkar Mah.), 11101 (Taşköprü Mah.), 11172 (Hacı Bekir Mah.), 16403 (Belgrad Mah.) and for the Christians ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11020 (varoşda olan mahalle çiftliği), 11024 (Papas İstanko Mah.), 11025 (Papas Đorde Mah.), 11032 (mah. çiftliği), 11033 (mah. çiftliği), 11042 (Kuriška/Kruška çiftl.), 11055 (mah. çiftliği), 11062 (mah. çiftliği), 11074 (mah. çiftliği), 11083 (mah. çiftliği), 11105 (mah. çiftliği), 11117 (mah. çiftliği, Palilula çiftl.), 11127 (Papas Yona Mah.), 11133 (Çinçar Mah.), 11138 (Papas Kosto Mah.), 11142 (Sagır Kıptıyan Mah.), 11153 (Kebir Kıptıyan Mah.), 11170 (Yagodine/Jagodin), 11173 (mah. çiftliği), 11174 (mah. çiftliği).

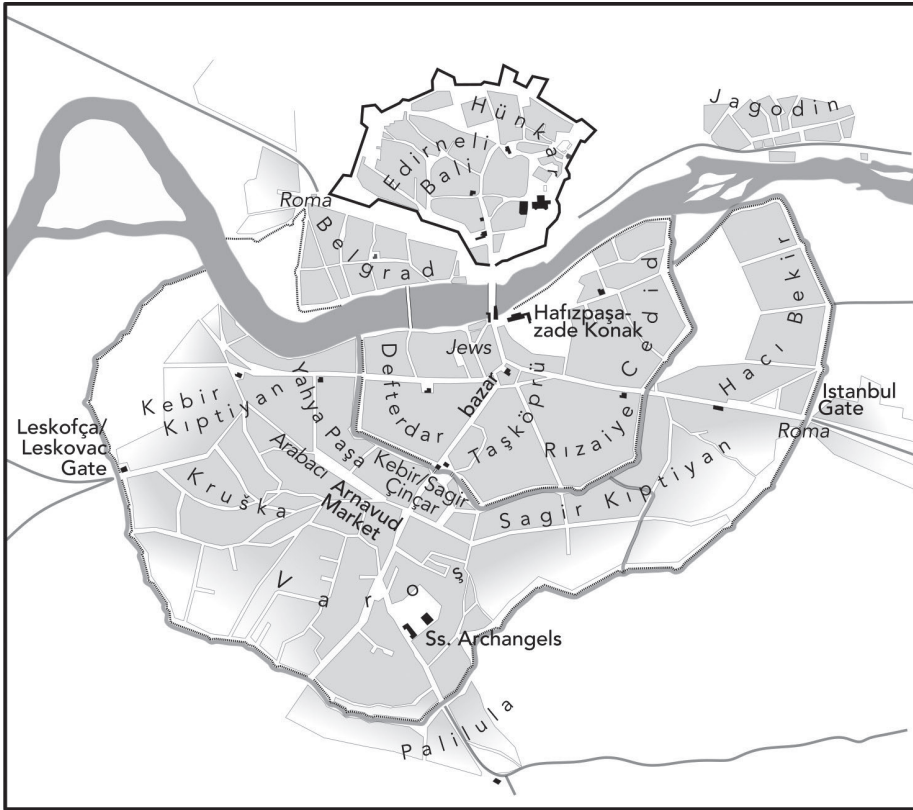


Fig. 5.1: Niš around 1840. Adapted from Feliks Daljković's plan of Niš, 1:4000, March 1878 (OeStA, KA KPS KS G I b, 169-3). Cartography by Florian Riedler.

The sample of registers concerning the Muslim population clearly shows a differentiation in wealth among the quarters that was not visible from the previous censuses. The following analysis will compare Hacı Bekir as the poorest quarter with Taşköprü, the richest. However, it will start with Hünkâr, one of the two quarters located inside the fortress, to give an impressionistic overview of the social and economic status of the Muslim inhabitants of Niš without any pretence to statistical accuracy.

The Hünkâr Quarter³⁴¹ was one of the two quarters situated in the citadel, the military and administrative heart of the city that included the governor's *konak*. It formed around the oldest mosque of the city, which was located in

341 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11082.

the north-western part of the fortress. The 83 households of the quarter together possessed income and assets of 33,289 *kuruş*, i.e. 401 *kuruş* on average. Compared to the other quarters of Niš and quarters in other Ottoman cities on which we have data,³⁴² Hünkâr was neither particularly rich nor poor.

The register starts with the record of the imam and goes on with several other inhabitants whose income was above average: a farmer (*erbab-ı ziraat*), the owner of the local *hamam*, two merchants and an official, the supervisor of the population register (*nüfus nazırı*). With the exception of the imam, all of these had considerable property in the city, mostly shops and workshops they rented out, as well as landed property in the countryside such as fields and gardens. Four individuals each possessed a privately owned estate (*çiflik*) in the countryside, which could consist of an entire village with several hundred hectares of farmland attached.³⁴³ Only one of them was designated as a farmer (*erbab-ı ziraat*); the others were the *hamam* owner, a merchant and a craftsman. With a yearly income of 4565 *kuruş*, the official was the richest inhabitant of Hünkâr. Altogether nine inhabitants of the quarter had an income exceeding one thousand *kuruş* per year, among them a sheikh who owned several gardens in the quarter. However, the vast majority of households had to get by with less than 500 *kuruş*.

Among this majority of less well-to-do inhabitants we find a wide array of professions. The biggest professional group consisted of sixteen servants (*hizmetkar*). Moreover, small traders were important, like two pedlars (*ayak tüccarı, gezginci*), three grocers (*bakkal*), four tobacconists (*duhancı*) and one second-hand clothes dealer (*eskici*) as well as three fodder dealers (*yemişçi*). The set was completed by the craftsmen as e.g. one carpenter (*doğramacı*), one farrier (*nalband*) and one tailor (*terzi*), as well as those who offered everyday services such as five barbers (*berber*) and two coffee house keepers (*kahveci*). Apart from these craftsmen, a group of four scribes (*katib*), three brokers (*tellal*) and five professional artilleryists (*topçu*) also lived in the quarter. As was to be expected for a garrison town, the military was very important in Niš. As has been already remarked, it not only employed full-time soldiers, but eleven of the above-mentioned craftsmen and workers also were enrolled as artilleryists, it seems on a part-time basis, and received a soldier's pay on top of their normal earnings.

342 Svetla Ianeva, 'Samakov: An Ottoman Balkan City in the Age of Reforms', in *The Ottoman State and Societies in Change: A Study of the Nineteenth Century Temettuat Registers*, ed. Kayoko Hayashi and Mahir Aydın (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), 67.

343 The size of these *çiflik*s was not registered with the entry of their owners in the survey, but in the register of the respective village (which I could not crosscheck). We have a notion of their size from a later source, which will be discussed below in chapter 6.1.

Compared to Hünkar, Taşköprü,³⁴⁴ which was of almost the same size, was a rich neighbourhood. As its name indicates, it was situated in the left-bank city immediately at the bridge. The quarter had a total income of 81,758 *kuruş*, i.e. 1,021 on average per household. Hafızpaşazade Mahmud Pasha and his brother Ali were the richest from among the numerous rich people who lived in Taşköprü. The two brothers were recorded at the first position probably because they lived together in the *konak* their father had built near the bridgehead. They had an annual income of 15,808 *kuruş*, mostly from land and shops they rented out. In addition, ten wealthy people who drew their income from agricultural land lived in the quarter. Some bore the title of *sipahi*, others were designated as farmers (*erb-ab-ı ziraat*), and one Hacı Mustafa v. Abdurrahman was registered as a landowner (*eshab-ı alaka*) with four *çiftlik*s plus 480 *dönüm* of private fields in his possession. Chapter 6.1 will discuss the importance of landownership for the urban elite in greater detail.

Two of the officials living in Taşköprü, the administrator of the foundation of Paşa Mosque as well as the financial scribe of the city (*sandık katibi*), also had an above-average income. Additionally, there were three lower-ranking scribes representing the group of officials in the quarter. With four imams, one muezzin, a teacher (*müderris*) and three students, the quarter also had a small community of ‘intellectuals’.

Because it comprised the central bazaar street, Taşköprü was also chosen as a residence by four merchants. Two of them had just recently arrived from Gjakova (Ott. Yakova) in Kosovo, a town located on the road from Shkodër (Ott. İşkodra) to Prishtina. They represent the trade relations of Niš with the south-west and the Adriatic Sea. Around the middle of the century, there was a lively export of wax and wool from Niš via Shkodër to the Habsburg port of Trieste. The merchants from Gjakova probably acted as buyers or forwarding agents for these or other products coming from Macedonia or Bulgaria.³⁴⁵

The remainder of the population of Taşköprü consisted of craftsmen and service workers who, as a rule, had a more modest income. Again, many professions were on record of which none had an overall majority: two pedlars, two grocers, two barbers, two tanners (*debbag*), two carpenters, a tobacconist, two servants, three coffee house keepers, a farrier, five saddlers (*sarraç*) and four tailors. Nine of these craftsmen were also enrolled as artilleryists.

344 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11101.

345 Johann Georg von Hahn, *Albanesische Studien* (Jena: Mauke, 1854), 105–111.

In comparison to Taşköprü, Hacı Bekir³⁴⁶ was considerably larger with 103 households, but with a total income of 25,786 *kuruş* and an average income of 250 *kuruş* per household, it was also a rather poor neighbourhood. It was one of the two Muslim quarters in the urban extension situated to the east of the old core between the river and the road to Istanbul. Its only wealthy inhabitant was a landowner and *sipahi*; the income of the rest of the population seldom exceeded 500 *kuruş*.

Like the other quarters, the bulk of the population worked in a wide variety of professional branches. Among the small traders there were six grocers and two fodder dealers. There were the classical craftsmen, e.g. five tailors, two stitchers or cobblers (*dikici*), five felt makers (*keçeci*), three farriers, three knife makers (*biçakçı*), two carpenters and three pipe makers (*lüleci*). Additionally, there was an extraordinarily large group of 27 servants as well as two carters (*araba kiracısı*) living in the quarter.

Hacı Bekir was home to five professional soldiers and 19 of the other residents were enrolled as artillerists in addition to their civilian professions. There were also a number of officials and religious people like a *muhtar*, two muezzins and a sheikh. Five households whose heads were describes as ill or old as well as three orphans underline the poor material conditions under which many of the inhabitants of Hacı Bekir lived.

Apart from giving an overview of the social status of different quarters, the registers also make special groups of inhabitants visible such as religious dignitaries, officials or members of the military. Because in contrast to the first censuses discussed above, the aim of the wealth and income survey was not military, some women were also recorded. Particularly in the rich households, the property of mothers (*valide*), wives (*halile*, *zevce*), and daughters (*kerime*) was recorded alongside that of their male relatives. With Salima Hatun, widow of Hacı Ahmed Ağa living in the Belgrad Quarter of Niš, we find at least one woman who acted as head of a particularly well-endowed household. Among the property she rented out were five *dönüms* of gardens, a donkey and a watermill in the village of Gornji Dušnik (Zir Dušenik), located 30 kilometres to the south-east of Niš. Moreover, she owned and rented out an unspecified shop and two honey shops (*balhane*) in the Belgrad Quarter, a tin smithy in the Kazanci (Cauldron Maker's) Market as well as a candle maker shop at Arnavud Market. Her two-year-old orphaned grandson Mustafa also lived in Salima's house; he owed three villages as *çiftlik*,

346 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11172.

land in an around the city and five shops in the Belgrad Quarter and on Arnavud Market. The total income of the family was almost 6,000 *kuruş* annually.³⁴⁷

In sum, from the registers of the Wealth Survey we can reconstruct the social urban geography of those parts of the city whose registers have been preserved. These impressions can be rounded out with some additional information on professional life, which the census of 1840/41 (1256 AH) provides for the whole city.

In the census, 66 servants constituted by far the biggest professional group. Usually, this was a poorly paid job that required little training.

Surprisingly, with 56 members, the tanners with their journeymen and apprentices were the second biggest professional group, although they did not play a significant role in any of the quarters presented above. The explanation is that many of them were living in Yahya Paşa, a neighbourhood whose registers were not among the surviving ones of the Wealth Survey. The quarter was located outside the old core to the west, where the tanneries must have been located at the river downstream from the bridge. A large group of 17 saddlers can be added to the tanners, showing a cluster in the leather producing and processing crafts among the Muslims.

The next largest professional group were the cart drivers with 46 members who were also very strong in Yahya Paşa, probably because of the location of that neighbourhood near the Arnavud Market. More evenly distributed in the city were those professions that offered everyday services such as the group of 28 barbers, the 24 grocers, the 17 coffee house keepers and their employees, 17 tailors and 16 farriers. Niš also had a relatively large group of 27 Muslim merchants who were concentrated in the quarters around the central bazaar such as Taşköprü, Rızaiye and Defterdar.

The registers of the Wealth Survey concerning the Christian inhabitants of Niš offer a similarly incomplete sample. The Christian community (*varoş*) is divided into quarters (*mahalle*), of which seven registers are extant: Papas İstanko, Papas Đorđe,³⁴⁸ Papas Kosto, Sagir Kiptiyan, Kebir Kiptiyan, Kebir Çinçar and Papas Yona. Some of these quarters are named after priests, others after actual or former groups of inhabitants, i.e. Roma (*kıpti*) and Aromanians, called Cincar in the Serbian context. There were also a number of smaller registration units on the

³⁴⁷ ML.VRD.TMT.d... 16403, 6. In the already mentioned *çiftlik* list from 1880 (HR.SYS. 1452/1) Mustafa's *çiftlik*s belong to one Şükriye Hanım, possibly his wife, who thus became one of the biggest landowners in Niš. See chapter 6.1.

³⁴⁸ As was conventional, the Ottoman scribe used the *kef* to render the South-Slavic *đ* in Christian names. This is why I decided in this case to render the transliteration from the Ottoman as Đorđe as in modern Serbo-Croatian. In the other cases I have tried to keep the Ottoman spelling of Greek or South-Slavic names.

fringe of the city, which will be examined in the next section. As in the case of the Muslims, the following will give an impressionistic overview of the Christian community based on a selection of registers from the Wealth Survey mostly focusing on the quarters in the central part of the *varoş*, i.e. near the bishop's residence.

With 83 households, Papas İstanko,³⁴⁹ whose exact location cannot be determined, was a fairly big quarter. Altogether, this unit had an income of 91,817 *kuruş* or 685 *kuruş* on average. Of the 83 households in the quarter, quite a few had over 1,000 *kuruş* of yearly income. The richest inhabitant was a renter of horses and transporter (*kiracı*) with a yearly income 2,772 *kuruş*. Reflecting the position of Niš on the overland route, this was a widespread profession: ten individuals in this quarter were registered as *kiracı*s. Other big professional branches were represented by 16 carpenters (*dülger*), twelve servants and twelve day labourers. In smaller numbers we find potters (*çömlekçi*), pack-saddle makers (*semerci*), weavers of wool cloth (*çulha*), furriers (*kürkçü*) and gardeners (*bahçıvan*). The innkeepers (*meyhaneci*) represent another professional group that was typical for the Christian community of Balkan cities. All of the five innkeepers registered in Papas İstanko were quite affluent, earning more than 1,000 *kuruş*. A big part of this income, in three cases up to 50 per cent, was generated by fields and gardens they owned outside the city.³⁵⁰

Similar to Papas İstanko, we do not know the exact location of Papas Đorđe,³⁵¹ but it is likely that it was also located in the central part of the *varoş*. The quarter was composed of 49 households and was smaller and poorer regarding its total and average income of 22,688 *kuruş* and 463 *kuruş* respectively. It had only one very rich inhabitant, a tailor earning almost 4,000 *kuruş*, whose wealth mainly derived from his possession of fields and gardens as well as a shop and a tavern he rented out. Other inhabitants, mostly craftsmen, earned moderately well because of their additional income from fields and gardens outside the city. The professions of the inhabitants of Papas Đorđe were quite diverse. The biggest professional groups were nine servants, six innkeepers, five tailors, eight hoers (*çapacı*), three transporters, two gardeners, two potters and two carpenters.

In contrast to these two quarters whose exact location is not known, a late nineteenth-century map shows Kebir Kiptiyan between Leskofça Gate at the outer ring of palisades and the Yahya Paşa Quarter. With 83 households, it was a

349 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11024.

350 There are two inhabitants of Papas İstanko that are characterised as 'Nasrani'. Are they members of the South-Hungarian Nazaren community? See Bojan Aleksov, *Religious Dissent between the Modern and the National: Nazarenes in Hungary and Serbia 1850–1914* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2006).

351 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11025.

populous quarter and with an average income of 404 *kuruş*, not poor. The richest Christian of the surviving sample of the Wealth Survey lived here, the merchant Anastas veled-i(child of) Marko. He owned gardens, a shop on Arnavud Market and a storehouse, but made most of his money, annually 3,586 *kuruş*, with his trading activities. There were three other merchants living in the quarter as well as nine grocers. However, in Kebir Kıptıyan, like in the other parts, professions with a rural background were also widespread. An example of this is the large group of ten hoers and five gardeners. As members from other professional groups, we find eight tailors, six servants, five shoemakers, four furriers, three bakers, three inn-keepers and three fodder dealers (*samanacı*). Additionally, there were three priests living in this quarter.

The image of the Christians emerging from the sample of the Wealth Survey is that of a socially and professionally differentiated urban community. Christians, unlike their Muslim co-citizens, could not find employment in the military or as Ottoman officials, but they worked in many other branches of the urban economy. Regarding their income, Christians could be found among the rich, but at the same time also among the very poor inhabitants of Niš. Some of the poorer who were employed in professions that required little skill such as day-labourer or hoer might have been recent immigrants from the countryside. Above a certain income, all of them had fields and gardens outside the city, which constituted a considerable part of their wealth.

Regarding the Christian population of Niš, we have an additional source of information that can help us to complete the sketchy picture as it arises from the Wealth Survey. This is a poll tax (*cizye*) register compiled in 1845/6 (1262 AH), one year after the survey of wealth and income.³⁵² The poll tax was a very important part of the Ottoman budget, so these registers were updated regularly. Especially at the beginning of the reform era, the Ottoman administration was trying to reach a more accurate registration of all poll tax payers.³⁵³ The first part of this poll tax register treats the city proper (*varoş*); two succeeding parts refer to the villages in the district. In the poll tax register the *varoş* was subdivided into smaller entities named after the priests who supervised them, which highlights

352 BOA, ML.VRD.CMH.d... 653.

353 Hidemitsu Kuroki, 'Zimmis in Mid-Nineteenth Century Aleppo: An Analysis of Cizye Defteris', in *Essays on Ottoman Civilisation: Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the Comité International d'Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes, Praha 1996* (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Oriental Institute, 1998), 205–250; Machiel Kiel, 'Remarks on the Administration of the Poll Tax (cizye) in the Ottoman Balkans and Value of Poll Tax Registers (cizye defterleri) for Demographic Research', *Études Balkaniques* 1990, no. 4: 70–104.

the important role the church played in the collection of taxes. The names of these priests do not match the names of quarters named after priests as used in the Wealth Survey. Sometimes it was indicated whether these entities were part of a conventional quarter such as e.g. Kebir Kiptiyan, which was supervised by four different priests. But even in this case, there are only a few matches between the poll tax register and the Wealth Survey regarding the registered individuals. This makes a direct comparison very difficult and calls for further investigation of the process of registration and the overall source value of the censuses.

The poll tax register provides information on all male Christian inhabitants of the city such as their profession, a short physical description, and the name, the age and the amount of tax they were liable to pay. The fact that the poll tax was levied at three levels of 15, 30 and 60 *kuruş*, allows a rough estimation of the taxpayer's financial situation. Because the entries were grouped in households, the tax registers also give an insight into the household structure of the Christian population. Regarding the household size, the Christian community of Niš displays an urban pattern with a concentration on the immediate family. The scholarly debate around the *zadruga*, the traditional extended household in rural Serbia, and its decline during the nineteenth century is not relevant in this urban context.³⁵⁴ Over 50 per cent of all households consisted of two or three male inhabitants, usually the father and one or two sons. Complex households with a father co-habiting with his grown sons who had sons of their own or grown brothers forming one household existed, but they were rare. Two of the largest households in the poll tax register consisted of eleven males, over half of which, however, were servants. In general, household members who had no direct blood relation to the head of the household such as servants, apprentices, taken-in children (*besleme*) or tenants amounted to approximately 20 per cent of the registered individuals.

Regarding the economic activity of the Christian inhabitants of Niš, the poll tax register clearly shows concentrations in certain professions. The most important was the textile and clothing sector. With over 100 members, the tailors constituted the biggest group here. Eighty were registered as masters who had approximately 30 apprentices but only two journeymen (*kalfa*). This structure is in line with the mode of small artisan production Todorov found for the cities of north-eastern Bulgaria in the 1860s.³⁵⁵ As *pantalonus*, a few of the tailors were specialised in fashioning European trousers. Many of the masters were well off and paid the highest level of poll tax. Possibly, they were working with the cloth produced in the villages around Niš as was the case, for example, in Plovdiv (Ott.

354 Holm Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Serbiens, 19.–21. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau, 2010), 149–160.

355 Todorov, *Balkan City*, 394–395.

Filibe) and other cities in today's Bulgaria that were centres of processing of and trade of a wool cloth called *aba*.³⁵⁶

Another big group in the textile sector were the furriers with more than 40 masters and apprentices. To these we can add sizeable numbers of makers of fur caps (*kalpakçı*), shoemakers (*pabuççu*), weavers of wool cloth (*abacı*, *çuhacı*), dyers (*boyacı*) and finally, at the end of the production cycle, the old clothes dealers (*eskici*).

An important regional product, wax, was processed by the candle makers (*mumcu*), of whom around 20 lived and worked in all parts of the city.

Other professions are closely connected to Niš as a trade city. This concerns first of all the ten Europe Merchants in the poll tax register. A comparison with the list in the first census of 1832/33 (1248 AH) reveals a high degree of fluctuation, but also enables us to discern the most established of these traders. One of them was the already-mentioned Anastas veled-i Marko, who is actually the only individual we encounter in all three documents, i.e. in the 1248 AH census, in the wealth and income survey as well as in the 1262 AH poll tax register. In the first census, he was listed with his two sons and two servants (*tabi*), who had two sons of their own. Over a decade later, when according to the poll tax register, Anastas was 80 years old, the constellation was still very similar. His first son, Đorđe (called Yorgaki in the first census) still worked alongside his father; the second son, Manol, if he was still alive, was probably working elsewhere as an apprentice; Manol's place had been taken by a third son, Lazar aged four. Additionally, there were three new servants, all in their twenties. The poll tax register also provides an interesting detail about Anastas who, instead of being registered with his patronym, is registered as originating from Kranya (Gr. Kranea or Krania), an Aromanian village near Trikala and Ioannina in present-day Greece. This marks Anastas as one of the Aromanian merchants who organised the trade between Macedonia and Central Europe along the trade route crossing Niš.

We can also see a connection to this network of Aromanian merchants in the case of the doyen of merchants, Đorđi veled-i Todori. Already in his sixties during the first census, he was registered at the first position together with his brother Kosto, who had three sons and three servants of his own. Unfortunately, this important family does not appear in the surviving sample of the Wealth Survey, but the two brothers are again recorded in the poll tax register, where they form two large households. Đoko Todor, as his name was spelled here, was living with his second son, Mihalaki, of eleven years, his son-in-law (*damat*) Nikolaki Risto, two grandsons, five servants and a tenant in one household. This son-in-law

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 209–216.

Nikolaki was the descendant of the very successful Aromanian merchant family Hristodulo, originating from Agrafa in Thessaly. Nikola's father had relocated the family to Salonica from whence Nikola went to Niš around 1840 to work for Haži Đoko Todorović (as Đoko Todor is called in Serbian sources) and married his daughter. Nikola inherited the large house that his father-in-law had built around 1820 on the central bazaar street near the church Ss. Archangels and which was one of the biggest private houses in the city. It became known as the Hristodulo House and survived until it was demolished by the family in 1944.³⁵⁷

Since the time of the first census, Đoko's brother Kosto had established his own household nearby, where he lived with three sons and seven servants, one of them specified as a scribe. In 1837 he organised the reconstruction of the church in the monastery in Gabrovac, a village six kilometres south of the city.³⁵⁸ Together with other merchants mentioned in the first census and the poll tax register such as Nikolče Sotirović and Profir Mančin, Kosto was a subscriber of the works of Dositej Obradović, the Serbian educator and enlightened author.³⁵⁹

This handful of merchants relied on a much larger group of professionals who constituted the service infrastructure of Niš as a trading city. The transport of goods was ensured by carters or drivers (*arabacı*), who were probably the same as the *kiracı*s of the Wealth Survey. Most of the 20 cart drivers lived in quarters at the margins of the city. Sixteen innkeepers were running the khans of the city where merchants and travellers would rest during their stay. This infrastructure was completed by the taverns of the city, which were tended by a group of 13 professionals. Merchants and innkeepers also employed many of the 38 servants, of whom others worked in private homes.

Another group that appears in the poll tax register are labour migrants called *bekar* in the Ottoman urban context. These workers were not part of the regular resident population and usually lived in collective habitations like khans or special rooms (*bekar odalari*) in the market area of cities. They usually came from the countryside to the city to work for a time before going back to their home villages. In this, they resembled the *pečalbars* mentioned earlier, but their comings and goings were less ritualised. They could be young and unmarried like their term *bekar* suggests – it means bachelor in modern Turkish, but actually derives from the Persian *bî-kar* meaning 'without (proper) work' – but in fact, many of them

357 Dušan J. Popović, *O Cincarima: Prilozi pitanju postanka našeg građanskog društva* (Belgrade: Prometej, 2008, first ed. 1937), 471–472; 'Kuća Hristodulovih', in *Niški Leksikon*, ed. Milivoje Stefanović (JP Službeni Glasnik i Grad Niš), 263–264.

358 'Sv. Trojica, Manastir', *Niški Leksikon*, 453.

359 'Prenumeranti', *Niški Leksikon*, 411.

had families back home. In big cities like Istanbul, the authorities feared them for their unruly behaviour and therefore strictly controlled them.³⁶⁰

Because migrant workers did not constitute regular households, in Niš they were registered separately in two sections of the poll tax register. The first section covers the bazaar (*çarşı*) of the inner city where several innkeepers and their servants, who were all designated as Greek (*Rum*), resided. In addition, there were large groups of tailors, furriers and fur cap makers as well as bakers of bread and *simit*, some of the latter singled out as Greek or Catholic (*Latin*). The second section included those labour migrants living at the fringe of the city. Among them we see rural occupations such as hoers or gardeners, but also an innkeeper with his apprentices. Both sections refer to the hometowns of some of the work migrants such as nearby Leskovac (Ott. Leskofça), Bitola (Ott. Manastır) in Macedonia or Plovdiv in today's Bulgaria.

A separate census of the foreigners (*yabancı*) in the city undertaken in 1845 provides information on labour migration to Niš in a more systematic manner.³⁶¹ This foreigner census lists 144 Christians in 18 different parts of the city and some outlying locations. The doctor Pural (?) veled-i Yoan is the only citizen of a foreign state (the name is not disclosed in the register); all others are Ottomans from different parts of the country.

Approximately 50 innkeepers (*hancı*) with their apprentices constitute the biggest professional group from among these internal migrants. They ran khans inside the city, but also in villages along the Istanbul–Belgrade road such as Toponica, Draževac (Ott. Diraşefça) and Kizilhane (?), as well as in Klisura and Dukat on the road to Leskovac. They rented these khans from their proprietors as e.g. Hafızpaşazade Mahmud and his brother. For the khan in Draževac, the owners collected 2,100, and for the one in Toponica, 600 *kurus*.³⁶² The overwhelming majority of the innkeepers originated from Ioannina (Ott. Yanya) and Zagor in northern Epirus and from Bitola and Prilep (Ott. Pirlepe) in Macedonia. They were the representatives of the Aromanian networks of labour migration that not only and not primarily consisted of merchants, but included many other professions as has been noted previously. For the eighteenth century, this migration is hard to pinpoint and only left urban toponyms such as the Cincar Quarter. In

360 Florian Riedler, 'The Role of Labour Migration for the Urban Economy and Governance of Nineteenth Century Istanbul', in *Urban Governance Under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (London: Routledge, 2014), 145–158.

361 'Nefs-i Niş Yabancıyan Defteri', NFS.d.. 6013.

362 ML.VRD.TMT.d.... 11101, p. 2.

the foreigner census, however, Aromanian migration, which apparently continued into the nineteenth century, becomes more concrete and quantifiable.

The second largest group among the internal migrants in the foreigners register are the bakers, which was a typical migrant profession throughout Ottoman Empire. For example, in the capital of Istanbul, Armenians from Eastern Anatolia constituted a large part of the bakers in the late nineteenth century.³⁶³ Also in other cities of Ottoman Europe such as the cities in the Danube Province, bakers constituted the second largest group of labour migrants in the 1870s. Some of these came from Macedonia, but also from other regions such as the Balkan mountains and Thrace.³⁶⁴ In 1840s Niš, the 28 registered bakers originated predominantly from cities in Kosovo such as Prizren, Prishtina and Peja (Ott. İpek) and some also from the towns south of Niš such as Leskovac and Vranje (Ott. İvranye). Taking into account the information given in the poll tax register, they were most probably Catholic Albanians, but it might just as well be that this migration network was organised across confessional boundaries and also comprised Orthodox Slav bakers with the same regional background. In addition to these bakers, we find 18 bakers of *simit* (*simitçi*) who all originated from Ioannina. A nineteenth-century French traveller to Ioannina has taken note of the bakers from that part who migrated to all of Rumelia.³⁶⁵ It is impossible to say whether these *simit* bakers were Aromanians like the innkeepers probably were, or if also in this case different communities from the same region assembled in one network.

Finally, the foreigners register shows a large group of 20 horse grooms (*seyis*). They do not display a single regional background, but come from different cities in the region, e.g. Leskovac and Pirot (Ott. Şehirköy), but also from other cities as far away as Prilep, Sofia and Edirne. It seems that these migrants came to Niš by way of the routes on which their profession as horse grooms thrived.

The other important non-Muslim community from among the inhabitants of Niš were the Jews, whose registers from the Wealth Survey are not extant, but who also appear in the poll tax register. According to this register, they were living at the foundation (*vakıf*) of Paşa Mosque, i.e. right in the centre of the city to the west of the bridge. The Jewish community was composed of 67 households, which were active in all sorts of professions. The most widespread were the knife grinders (*çarkçı*) with 16 members; herbalists/grocers (*attar*) with 15; silk manufacturers (*kazzaz*) with six; grocers with four; innkeepers with three and tin smiths (*tenekeci*)

363 Florian Riedler, 'Hagop Mintzuri and the Cosmopolitan Memory of Istanbul', EUI RSCAS Working Paper, 2009, <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/10913>.

364 Todorov, *Balkan City*, 372.

365 François C.H.L. Pouqueville, *Travels in Epirus, Albania, Macedonia, and Thessaly* (London: Richard Phillips, 1820), 45.

with two members. In contrast to the Muslim and the Christian communities of Niš, there were only two servants registered among the Jews of the city.

Finally, the poll tax register completes the picture of the different urban communities with the Roma. The small community of Christian Roma consisted of fifteen households whose location in the city was not indicated, if they lived in one place at all. Judging from the fact that all of these households only paid the lowest level of the poll tax (15 *kuruş*) the group must have been rather poor. Among them, there were many servants as well as a few cart drivers (*arabacı*).

Although Muslim Roma were also liable to pay the poll tax, they were not listed in the poll tax register of 1262 AH. There is also no register from the Wealth Survey pertaining to them. However, we can get an insight into their economic status by way of a census undertaken in 1845 (1261 AH), which was organised exclusively for Roma households and neighbourhoods in two separate files.³⁶⁶ Fifty-six of them were located at the Istanbul Gate where the road to Istanbul left the second ring of palisades around the left bank city. In this area a group of *bekar* from the Roma community also lived. Another cluster of 47 households was called the Carters' Quarter (Ott. Arabacı Mahallesi, Serb. Rabadži-mala) in the city centre adjacent to Arnavud Market.³⁶⁷ The most widespread occupation among the members of these two quarters was that of blacksmith (*demirci*), but there were also horse grooms, grocers and tobacco sellers (*duhani*). A third community of 19 households was living in the Belgrad Quarter. In the same quarter, but listed separately, a community of 58 households lived who was almost exclusively working as horse dealers (*canbaz*).³⁶⁸

The case of the Muslim Roma of Niš shows how occupations registered by the Ottoman state could become toponyms as in the case of the Arabacı Mahallesi. At the same time, these professional designations also served as ethnonyms. Among the Roma of Yugoslavia, the scholarship distinguishes subgroups with their own dialect such as Džambaz or Rabadži, which was also called Kovač, meaning blacksmith.³⁶⁹

Summing up, the poll tax register and other censuses give some additional information about the non-Muslim inhabitants of Niš and their social and economic status, most importantly, it allows a glimpse at the community of Roma and the Jews of the city. At the end of the first part of the poll tax register, we find an overall summation of all taxpayers in Niš and its immediate environs. It

366 NFS.d.. 6011, 6012.

367 Nenad Jašić, *Stari Niški Romi* (Niš: KSS, 2001), 9.

368 NFS.d.. 6012, 21–29.

369 For the situation in Skopje, see Victor A. Friedman, 'Seven Varieties of Arli: Skopje as a Center of Convergence and Divergence of Romani Dialects', *Romani Studies* 27, no. 1 (2017): 29–45.

calculates roughly 2,900 poll tax payers in the three categories for the city. For the overall number of Christians, we would have to add ca. 25 per cent minors – this was the ratio in the four units of the *varoş* discussed above – as well as other groups like high clergy who were not liable to pay the poll tax. Together with an equal number of female inhabitants, we would arrive at a total of roughly 7,500 Christian inhabitants, which is at the low end of the estimations given by European travellers.

5.3 Urban Territories and Their Boundaries

It has become obvious that the various censuses of the 1830s and 1840s had a clear administrative function and therefore only provide a very specific set of data. However, despite their restrictions and their technical nature, in many instances, these censuses reflect ideals of the urban social order and therefore can be helpful in a discussion on wider issues of Ottoman urbanity. This starts from the level of the individual inhabitants – there is a strong focus on the male tax-paying head of household – and continues with the way the different communities were registered. At the same time, the censuses also provide insight into the realities of living together. Their data can provide certain clues as to the boundaries governing urban society as well as the way cultural, political or religious identities translated to urban space.³⁷⁰

A concept that appears in the censuses and that also scholars have used to describe the relation between communal identities and urban space is that of the quarter or *mahalle*. From an administrative perspective, the *mahalle* acted as the interface between the state and the city population regarding taxation and security. Meanwhile, as a number of houses grouped around a mosque, a church or a synagogue, the *mahalle* was also a socially defined territory in the Ottoman city. From here, it derived its function as arguably the main source of identity for its inhabitants in between the family and the religious community.³⁷¹

Especially the Muslim quarters in Niš conform very well with this ideal-typical description. The censuses show the fiscal and administrative functions of quarters and, at the same time, single out the imams who connected these administrative functions with the religious and social functions of the quarters. After an evolution in the eighteenth century, the Muslim quarters of Niš seem to have been very stable

370 Nora Lafi and Florian Riedler, 'Administrative Boundaries, Communal Segregation and Factional Territorialisation: The Complex Nature of Urban Boundaries in the Ottoman Empire', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, no. 4 (2018): 593–605.

371 Özer Ergenç, 'Osmanlı Şehrindeki "Mahalle"'nin İşlev ve Nitelikleri Üzerine', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 4 (1984): 69–78.

and spatially well defined. The nine Muslim quarters of Niš, which structure the registration of the censuses, continue until the end of the Ottoman period.

The situation was different in the case of the Christian inhabitants whose quarters, as they appeared in the censuses, seem to have been less well defined. Throughout the censuses the registration units changed, and it is hard to locate them on a map. Unlike the mosques that anchored Muslim quarters, there were no parish churches in Niš. Similar to other Balkan cities, the Christian community had only one or two churches. In the case of the Christians, it is unclear whether the different units also had functions other than organising the collection of taxes. Consequently, many of the names of these units were not stable, as a map drawn in 1878 reveals. It seems that the names for the units changed with the priests responsible for them. Even in the cases where stable toponyms existed, e.g. in the case of Kebir Kiptiyan, we do not know if these were only names for areas or if they also had the character and functions similar to that of Muslim *mahalles*. For the Christians, probably the *varoş* was more important than the subordinate entities as an overarching community organisation as well as a spatial reference point.

On the whole, the registers suggest a high degree of spatial separation between the Muslim and Christian inhabitants of Niš. I would argue that this is not just an effect of the registration practice, but a result of the particular urban development that we have followed so far. As a legacy from the eighteenth century, the fortress was an exclusively Muslim space with two regular quarters, Hünkâr and Edirneli Bali Quarters. It acted as the military and administrative centre of the city. It seems that the old core of the left bank city had also developed into a Muslim space, which contained four of the nine Muslim quarters, the Taşköprü, Defterdar, Rızaiye and Cedid Quarters. However, we have no information on when the Christians who had lived there in the eighteenth century had left the area and settled in the suburbs, which would eventually become part of the city.

Instead, with the *varoş* outside the old core but inside the second ring of palisades, a Christian space had been defined. In its southern part with the bishop's palace, the school and the principal church, it formed the administrative and spiritual centre of the Christian community. The boundary between *varoş* and old core was clearly marked with the ditch of the former inner ring. In the middle of the nineteenth century, it could not possibly have had a military function but was kept as a sewer and possibly to mark the boundary between Muslim quarters and Christian *varoş*. As we will see in chapter 6.2, this boundary not only separated but also offered a way of cooperation between the two communities when the ditch had to be cleaned for health reasons.

This image of the city as clearly differentiated into a Muslim and a Christian territory is an oversimplification. The censuses show that on the margins of these spheres there were areas where Muslim and Christian inhabitants lived closely

together. Moreover, for groups such as the Jews and the Roma, who could not be categorised into either community, this was also expressed spatially on the level of urban morphology. All the contact zones were very economically active areas where exigencies of the urban economy overruled the societal ideal of religious separation. The Arnavud Market, a longish square located in the *varoş* parallel to but not immediately at the south-western front of the inner ditch, was one of these areas. To the north Yahya Paşa, the tanners' quarter, which was one of the few Muslim quarters outside the fortress and the old core, bordered on Arnavud Market. Directly at Arnavud Market, the Arabacı Quarter of Muslim Romas was located, which constituted a micro-territory within the market area. Towards its south end, the *varoş* continued until the outer ring of palisades.

We find a very similar situation at the Istanbul Gate, where the road towards Sofia and Istanbul left the outer ring towards the east. As we have seen from the censuses, a large community of Muslim Roma could be found here, probably inside as well as outside the gate. Likewise, a number of khans and bakeries, where 'foreign' workers from Kosovo and Macedonia stayed, were located in this area. To the north, inside the palisades, was the quarter of Hacı Bekir, the Muslim quarter to the east of the old core and separated from it by a graveyard, as shown on the 1878 map; to the south of Istanbul Gate was located a part of the *varoş* called Sagır Kıptiyan, whose inhabitants were not necessarily of Roma origin, despite the name of the quarter.

The third of the contact zones and probably the only truly mixed quarter was the Belgrad Quarter at the south-western flank of the fortress. Because of its location on the road from Belgrade, this was a very economically active area and remains so today. According to the wealth and income survey, with over 120 Muslim households, it was a particularly big quarter.³⁷² Its richest inhabitant was the *kadı/molla* of Niš, Abdurrahman Efendi, and other religious officials such as a sheikh, an imam and two muezzins lived here. Probably because it was located right next to the fortress, the quarter housed a group of 26 professional artillerymen. Six merchants and three pedlars (*ayak tüccarı*) also lived in the quarter, which was located in the area where the road coming from Belgrade reached the fortress and the bridge over the Nišava. Among the poorer inhabitants was a large group of 26 servants.

Additionally, the wealth and income survey registers 22 Christian households in the Belgrad Quarter, which seems to indicate that they were living inside the Muslim quarter or at least at its margins in its immediate vicinity. In part, their professions are connected to the economy of trade: among them are one innkeeper,

³⁷² ML.VRD.TMT.d... 16403.

one tavern keeper, three grocers and two carters (*araba kiracı*). The same is true for the already-mentioned community of Roma horse dealers, who also lived in Belgrad Quarter or close to it.

Finally, the census material can help to determine the boundaries between city and countryside. In this respect the registration practice of the Wealth Survey concerning the Christians is interesting. In addition to the regular quarters, many Christians were registered in smaller units called 'farm quarters' (*mahalle çiftliği*), i.e. former farmland that had been settled and was already incorporated into the city or still on its margins. Probably, the Christian settlers had to pay rent to the Muslim owners of the land. These farm quarters may count as a trace of the administrative practice of eighteenth-century urban growth, which can also be observed in other Balkan cities of the same period.³⁷³

The social composition of their inhabitants marks the farm quarters as being on the frontline of urban expansion into the countryside. Those six farms plus a watermill added to the register of Papas İstanko, perhaps for their close proximity, can serve as an example. Most of the 51 households registered here worked as transporters, day labourers and servants. Other farm units, some of them composed of just one to five houses, present a mixed picture; in general, we do not know their location other than being 'in the *varos*', which probably means that they were inside the second ring of palisades. Some were still clearly operated as farms, so that their inhabitants were registered as hoers, day labourers or gardeners.³⁷⁴ However, some of the farms clearly were in the process of developing into regular city quarters. There were up to 40 houses built on them, and their population was occupied in urban professions such as tailors, furriers, shoemakers, grocers etc.³⁷⁵

The structure of the farm quarters clearly indicates the direction of urban growth that was to accelerate in the decades after the Wealth Survey was conducted. When in 1858 the Austrian consul Johann Georg von Hahn passed Niš on his way to Salonica, he commented on the recent population boom:

[...] the large covered bazaar indicates the flourishing trade and that the city is growing fast, which is also proven by the numerous new buildings. People remember that earlier the extent of the city was only half of what is

373 Svetlana Ivanova: 'L'artisanat dans la région centrale des Balkans – les dynamiques du XIX^e siècle', in *Essays on Ottoman Civilisation: Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the Comité International d'Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes, Praha 1996* (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Oriental Institute, 1998), 166–167.

374 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11020.

375 E.g. ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11033, 11083, 11173.

now and that the area south of the river was covered with trees where now the suburbs are expanding.³⁷⁶

Urban expansion peaked in the 1860s when new city quarters were created outside the second ring of palisades, as the next chapter will show. The ongoing transformation of the urban morphology was the effect of the reform politics that also changed the city, its societal structure and its relation to the countryside.

376 Johann Georg v. Hahn, *Reise von Belgrad nach Salonik* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1861), 12.

6 Redrawing Urban Boundaries in the Tanzimat Era



Fig. 6.1: Niš Cathedral. Photo Florian Riedler, 2012.

In the second half of the nineteenth century a number of new buildings changed the appearance of Niš quite considerably. The Ottoman state constructed signature buildings and redesigned urban areas that represented the urban modernity of the Tanzimat period (1839–76) such as a new government palace inside the fortress, an orphanage, a renovated covered market street and a newly planned quarter to house refugees as well as a complex of barracks outside the city. Most visibly, Hafızpaşazade Bekir Bey added a new wing to his grandfather's *konak* in the middle of the city around 1860. While today none of these structures remain,

the Cathedral (Saborna Crkva), built in the decade after 1856 is the one structure still extant. Its tower-like domes absolutely dominated the southern skyline of Niš when it was constructed; it still marks a sharp contrast to the adjacent older church of Ss. Archangels, a low-lying structure designed as a 'sunken church', i.e., with its ground floor below street level. The increased visibility of the Cathedral in this urban space represented the Christians' altered position in Ottoman society during the reform period. As such, the building was a truly Ottoman church because its planning, construction and form were so closely linked with the reform program of the nineteenth century.

The attempts to centralise political and military power in the Ottoman Empire that had been pursued by the government in Istanbul since the late eighteenth century were finally starting bear fruit in the 1820s. Together with abolishing the janissary corps, Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) was able to defeat the most powerful provincial warlords and co-opt the smaller *ayans*. As part of this policy of centralisation, the state also sought to redefine the boundaries between the different groups in Ottoman society. In the context of the Ottoman Balkans, this concerned mainly the position of Christians in Ottoman society. In practical terms, local Christian communities could obtain permission to build new churches more easily, which had before been heavily restricted. Especially after the Tanzimat political program was declared in 1839 on the occasion of the ascension of Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–61), the Christians' participation in local administration was extended along with their overall legal status. They were included in the formalised local councils that became a characteristic feature of local administration during the Tanzimat era. In some parts of the empire, e.g. in Syria, these policies together with an economic conjuncture that was detrimental to Muslim business interests caused tensions and led to instances of urban violence.³⁷⁷

In the province of Niš, similar frictions were originating from the countryside caused by the implementation of new policies that contradicted older political and economic arrangements. The main event in this respect was the 1841 tax revolt by Christian peasants, which was suppressed after just a few weeks. The first section of this chapter will focus on this major event, which connects in many ways to the principal issues of the reform period. Although its main protagonists were peasants, the revolt also had repercussions on the city. In general, this event throws the boundaries between city and countryside into stark relief and can

377 Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Roderic H. Davison, 'Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century', *The American Historical Review* 59, no. 4 (11954): 844–864.

also help to problematise the religious and social boundaries that structured local society. Moreover, with *çiftlik* (the landed estate) the chapter will address the predominant system of landownership in the Niš area. Closely connected with this were the attempts of agrarian reform that the Ottoman government launched in the aftermath of the 1841 tax revolt. This issue, which was particularly prevalent in the Niš area, can serve as an example of a larger policy of the economic development of Ottoman territory, which was a dominant theme of Tanzimat policies.

In contrast to the friction in the focus of the first section, the second section will examine how urban governance worked in a more constructive way in the framework of the reform policy. In this section, the static picture of the social structure reconstructed from the censuses of Niš will be complemented by an examination of urban society in political action. It will focus on the already-mentioned building projects, which began to transform the cityscape of Niš beginning from the 1850s. These projects can illustrate the collaboration of the urban communities and their elites among each other as well as the relationship of provincial society with the central government in Istanbul. Particularly interesting is the case of church building, which provides an example for the transformation of internal boundaries of urban society and the corresponding territories of the city. Also in this instance, social processes inside local urban society and larger empire-wide political processes were entwined, as the section will demonstrate.

In the 1860s the central government made a new effort to restructure its relationship with the provinces and in this process intervened in urban governance more directly than before. Niš was awarded a central role in this policy when Midhat Pasha was nominated governor of Niš province, which was later incorporated into a larger model province centred on the Danube. Section three will examine this important episode, which increasingly integrated provincial inland cities such as Niš into an Ottoman urban modernity usually associated with the capital as well as the dynamic port cities of the Mediterranean. One important aspect was the modernisation of infrastructure that revived Niš as a traffic hub. The modernisation of the road network, which affected the flows of traffic and goods, also re-organised the territorial organisation of Ottoman Europe. It firmly established Niš as a centre of a sub-province for the rest of the Ottoman period and in a certain sense, also in post-Ottoman times.

6.1 The City and the Countryside

The army that assembled under the walls of the fortress in mid April 1841 did not come from the Habsburg Monarchy as in the eighteenth century nor from the insurgent Pashalik of Belgrade as in 1809; it had formed in the countryside surrounding Niš. Armed Christian peasants who had cut the road to Istanbul in the previous days were besieging the city to the degree that Governor Mustafa Sabri Pasha had to use artillery to dispel them. The detachments of irregulars the governor sent out to pursue the rebels not only attacked the two villages of Kamenica (Ott. Kamenice) and Matejevac (Ott. Matofça) to the north of Niš, which were the main rebel bases, but also began plundering many others throughout the district, driving away livestock and taking prisoners from among the peasants. These, in turn, were taking refuge in neighbouring Serbia by the thousands.

The timing of this peasant uprising in the first years of the reform period as well as its location in a strategic border area with an overwhelmingly Christian population attracted much attention. The Ottoman government immediately dispatched to Niš the judge (*kaziasker*) of Rumelia, Arif Hikmet Bey, who was touring the region. In mid-June two additional inspectors, Ahmed Tefrik Bey as well as the former governor of Edirne, Yakub Pasha, reached Niš to inquire about the causes of the uprising and to implement measures to prevent similar events from happening in the future. France and Russia, which had protested with the Porte against the treatment of the Christian population, also each sent a special envoy to the region. In the Principality of Serbia, a member of the senate was charged with investigating the events. All of these actors have offered various explanations of the revolt, which has also triggered the interest of quite a few scholars, who have addressed the uprising mainly as the result of economic underdevelopment of the Ottoman countryside.³⁷⁸ A central question in the context of this study will be what the peasant uprising reveals about the boundary as well as the link between city and countryside. This involves the examination of more general religious and social boundaries in local society as well as socio-economic and property relations and how they relate to the rural-urban divide.

378 Halil İnalçık, 'Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 5 (1973): 99–127; Mark Pinson, 'Ottoman Bulgaria in the First Tanzimat Period: The Revolts in Nish (1841) and Vidin (1850)', *Middle Eastern Studies* 11, no. 2 (1975): 103–146; Ahmet Uzun, *Tanzimat ve Sosyal Direnişler: Niş İsyanı Üzerine Ayrıntılı Bir İnceleme* (Istanbul: Eren, 2002); E. Atilla Aytekin, 'Peasant Protest in the Late Ottoman Empire: Moral Economy, Revolt, and the Tanzimat Reforms', *International Review of Social History* 57, no. 2 (2012): 191–227.

The main actors in the uprising, Christian peasants from the surroundings of Niš, justified their revolt in a petition they addressed to the sultan at an unknown point in time after the events.³⁷⁹ Referring to the promises made in the Tanzimat edict of 1839, they particularly singled out the failed reform of the tax system as their immediate reason to take up arms. A decree that specified the reform of the tax system for the district of Niš had proclaimed to do away with any special taxes and dues as well as with fees and free board for travelling officials; moreover, the decree had promised to abolish all labour duties the peasants had to deliver to their landlords. Instead, the government wanted to introduce a tax of three per cent on property, which all inhabitants of the district would be liable to pay, i.e. also hitherto tax-exempt groups such as the Muslim inhabitants of the city as well as those merchants who held the special status of Europe Merchants (*Avrupa tüccarları*). In the eyes of the rebels, responsibility for the failure to implement these plans lay with Governor Mustafa Sabri Pasha, who obstructed and distorted the reforms. According to them, the governor conspired with the *muhassıl*, the tax official sent by the centre, to double the value of the villagers' property in a survey of the tax basis of the district. Moreover, local officials continued to collect all kinds of dues on agricultural products in addition to the regular tithe. Yet it was only when the authorities announced that the new property tax would be raised from three to eight per cent that some Christians began their tax boycott. In reaction, the governor arrested nine Christian notables (*çorbacı*) who acted as leaders and sent them to prison in Sofia from whence their community was able to buy their freedom after two months.

According to the peasants' petition, Governor Sabri Pasha's abuse of authority in the tax question was coupled with instances of grave personal misconduct. He was accused of drunkenness and improper behaviour towards the inhabitants of the village of Matejevac, one of the future centres of the revolt. Moreover, the governor was also accused of colluding with the murderers of Christians as well as acts of rape and abduction of Christian women by Muslims. The victims of these criminal acts could not obtain justice because the governor would not accept any Christian witnesses in court, citing the procedural rules of the local sharia court. And finally, because the governor also prevented the villagers from addressing their grievances to the central government in Istanbul, they were left with no other means than to take up arms to defend their rights.

379 See the text in Uzun, *Tanzimat ve Sosyal Direnişler*, 103–107.

The report of the Serbian senator charged with examining the events spelled out and embellished these same allegations.³⁸⁰ It is probable that the senator's main sources of information were refugees from among the peasants of Niš who fled to Serbia. The villagers were portrayed as the party ready to find a compromise, while the Ottoman governor refused to listen to them. In addition to information already shared in the petition, the report also gives more details about the way the rebellion was crushed. The cruelty and criminal behaviour of a certain Czerin Beg (Kerim Bey) is highlighted among the local Muslim landowners. The burning and plundering of over 200 villages in the districts of Niš and Leskovac by Albanian irregulars is interpreted as a continuation of Sabri Pasha's suppression of the local Christians. The governor is also accused of having taken part in the slave trade with captured Christians.

The rebels' perspective puts at centre stage a Christian community that was suppressed, if not by the Muslims community as a whole, quite clearly by local Ottoman officials and landowners who demanded illegal taxes and attacked the honour and lives of the Christians. For the time and region, such a confrontation was not atypical. Starting from 1840, the inhabitants of Vranje (Ott. İvranye), a district town 120 kilometres to the south of Niš, petitioned against their governor with very similar complaints about cruelty and embezzlement of taxes. They were able to get rid of him only four years later in the course of a revolt of the local Muslims against the draft.³⁸¹ In the case of Niš, the rebels construct the countryside as an exclusively Christian space into which the Muslim authorities intruded, violating the privacy of villages with their extraordinary demands to be fed and entertained and to socialise with Christian women. However, in the city as a space of authority also, Christian inhabitants had to suffer the predations of the governor and his agents, as the various examples given in the documents make clear.

In contrast to the rebels, who had styled the uprising as a desperate attempt to gain justice against a tyrannical local official, the Ottoman inspectors sent to the region basically evaluated the violent events as a dispute over taxes that was turned into a rebellion by agitators from Serbia. In reconstructing the course of events in their internal reports, these officials admitted to some problems in implementing the wide-reaching promises the Tanzimat had made such as a more just system of taxation. However, not surprisingly, they underlined the proper conduct and

380 Stojan Romanski, *Avstrijski dokumenti po Niškoto Bŭlgarsko vŭzstanie ot 1841 god* (n.p., 1912), 149–153, Milleta Radoikovich, 29 April 1841.

381 Cengiz Kırılı, 'Tyranny Illustrated: From Petition to Rebellion in Ottoman Vranje', *New Perspectives on Turkey* 53 (2015): 3–36.

character of goodwill prevailing in the Ottoman administration and also dismissed all accusations against the governor.

Inspectors such as Yakub Pasha mainly blamed local groups for obstructing the implementation of the new system of taxation. He specifically singled out well-to-do Christian landowners in the countryside who feared that they would pay much more than before if taxes were assigned in proportion to their property and not as a lump-sum levelled on the whole village. In the traditional system, the wealthy and powerful leaders, who determined which amount each individual of the community had to pay, had much opportunity for tax evasion. As owners of vineyards, their opposition hardened when in autumn 1840 the government continued to collect duties on alcohol (*zecriye resmi*).

At the same time, the Ottoman inspectors had to admit that the administrative and communication processes inside the Ottoman bureaucracy were far from running smoothly. The central issue was the raising of the property tax from three to eight per cent. As already mentioned, the Christians of the district announced a tax boycott, and a large group of over one thousand villagers descended on Niš and demanded to see their tax records, fearing that the increase of five per cent was in reality pocketed by the governor and their own community leaders. They were allowed to examine the books, which were displayed in the church for two days, but then they were admonished to return home and were given one month to pay their arrears. After this period had passed, several villages in the districts of Niš, Leskovac and Pirot (Ott. Şehirköy) openly revolted. The rebels arrested a deputation consisting of the bishop and several priests as well as other leaders of the Christian community sent to them by the governor and once again came down to the city. Facing this imminent threat and having exhausted all peaceful and diplomatic means, the governor ordered the rebels to be dispersed, not without seeking the advice of the Muslim and Christian notables of the city.³⁸²

In their version of events, the Ottoman inspectors stressed the social boundaries within the Christian community, blaming the Christian village elites for using misunderstandings to orchestrate the tax boycott in order to safeguard their own privileges. In contrast, the urban Christian elites, including the church, are depicted as loyal to the Ottoman state. Boundaries within the Christian community are also highlighted in a report originating from the Serbian foreign office, but here the fronts run slightly differently. When the bishop of Sofia came to Niš to inquire into the causes of the uprising, 'the village elders testified in favour

382 İnalçık, 'Application of the Tanzimat', 115–119; Uzun, *Tanzimat ve Sosyal Direnişler*, 46–48 referring to the report of Yakub Pasha; Romanski, *Avstrijski dokumenti*, 140–141, translation of a report by Mustafa Sabri to the governor of Belgrade, 11 Rabiulevvel 1257 (3 May 1841).

of the Turks, but the poorer popular class as well as the middle class merchants against them, so that a confrontation among the Christians was imminent.³⁸³

As external agents fanning the tax boycott into open rebellion, the Ottoman officials' reports introduce agitators from Serbia. One of the Ottoman inspectors judges tax grievances as only a pretext for creating disturbances in the course of which Serbia would annex Niš as well as neighbouring districts.³⁸⁴ Modern research has verified the existence of such a network of agents, but its connection to the Serbian government under Prince Mihailo Obrenović (r. 1839–1842 and 1860–1868), who officially never supported the rebels and admonished them publicly to stay loyal to the sultan, remains unclear today.³⁸⁵

By analysing the events largely in social and technical-administrative terms, the central government saw its main task in re-establishing order and reconstructing the local society in the mould of Tanzimat policies. Immediate measures were implemented by Yakub Pasha when he reached Niš as an extraordinary inspector with a large contingent of regular troops in mid June. Although the official examination dismissed all accusations against Sabri Pasha, the governor was replaced, obviously to create the possibility for a fresh start. In addition, a decree that denied Muslims the right to carry arms was a way to ease tension in the city. The troops at his disposal allowed Yakub to replace the irregulars Sabri Pasha had called in and even to arrest some of them because they did not stop plundering. The inspector began interrogating the Christian captives, releasing many of them; he also ordered the restitution of plundered property and animals that had been assembled in the city. Among the captives were approximately 100 children, some of whom were given back to their parents or relatives while others were entrusted to Christian notables of Niš. Yakub Pasha also entered into negotiations with the Serbian side about the return of the almost 5,000 refugees, mostly from the district of Niš. Emergency aid of 150,000 *kuruş* was distributed among those who were willing to return to their burned villages. Until they had recovered economically, these villagers would also profit from various tax reductions.³⁸⁶

It was essential for the Ottoman government to establish itself as an arbiter above local groups in order to ensure peace and to establish central control.

383 Romanski, *Avstrijski Dokumenti*, 158–160, Protich, Belgrade, 9/21 June 1841.

384 Uzun, *Tanzimat ve Sosyal Direnişler*, 48, relying on the report of Ahmed Tevfik Bey.

385 Miloš Jagodić, 'Failed Conspiracy: Organisation and Preparation of the Serbian Uprising against Ottoman Rule in 1840–1841', *LIMESplus*, no. 3 (2015): 39–62.

386 Uzun, *Tanzimat ve Sosyal Direnişler*, 61–67; Atanskovics to Metternich, Belgrade, 1 July 1841, in Romanski, *Avstrijski Dokumenti*, 161–162.

Although there was no direct criticism of imperial officials such as Governor Sabri Pasha, he was quickly transferred elsewhere in order to allow all parties to return to the status quo ante. However, the fundamental causes of the revolt, i.e. the socio-economic structure of the countryside with its two interrelated problems of taxation and landownership, continued to trouble the Ottoman administration in Niš and in the wider region. Although the term was hardly mentioned in 1841, the *çiftlik*, i.e. a privately owned estate worked by sharecroppers, played a central role in the agrarian social question, which was not only a regional but an empire-wide issue. Niš belongs to a set of examples revealing a fundamental problem of the Ottoman state, i.e. how to protect its peasants from some of the exploitative arrangements tied to this system of landholding. The remainder of this section will take a closer look at this issue, which is very important for the formation of the urban elite in Niš as well as an overall economic conception of territory by the Tanzimat state.

Çiftliks are a well-established subject in Ottoman historical studies, serving as an example for the transformation of the Ottoman land regime in particular and the economy in general. Because some *çiftliks* produced cash crops such as cotton, which was exported to Europe, many scholars see them as a symbol of capitalist development in the Ottoman Empire.³⁸⁷

Chapter four has already thematised the emergence of *çiftliks* in the eighteenth-century *sancak* of Semendire; Radmila Tričković's work stressed the violent and illegal nature of this process, in which not only vacant land, but also existing villages were taken under private ownership by janissaries, *sipahis* and merchants such as Hafiz Mustafa's father. In her assessment, the wars of the eighteenth century were the main cause for this development because they produced a vulnerable and impoverished peasant population.³⁸⁸

Hristo Gandev, who studied *çiftlik* formation in the Vidin region, has shown how private estates were originally founded as an investment by Muslim urban elites on vacant land between regular villages. Such plots were sold by the state, but eventually the villages themselves also ended up in the possession of *ağas* from the city, who demanded contributions and labour services from their tenants in addition to the regular tithe. This regime of landownership, called *gospodarlık*, was

387 Gilles Veinstein, 'On the Çiftlik Debate' in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 35–53.

388 Radmila Tričković, 'Čitlučenje u Beogradskom Pašaluku u XVIII veku', *Zbornik Filozofskog Fakulteta* 11, no. 1 (1970): 525–549.

challenged ten years after the tax revolt in Niš in another violent peasant revolt that shook the Vidin area.³⁸⁹

From a long-term perspective, the multiple ways in which *çiflik*s were formed as private ownership of arable land is best expressed in Bruce McGowan's study on Macedonia. The violent seizure of land, mostly by military officials, which occurred from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, was one clearly illegal way to acquire a *çiflik*. In other cases, the landowner took over deserted villages or acquired a title to village land by taking over the accumulated tax debt of the villagers. During the weakening of the *timar* system, the *sipahis* themselves took part in selling, bequeathing or using as surety the land under their jurisdiction, which became thus privatised.³⁹⁰

As many of these historical studies have highlighted, the agents of the Ottoman state were deeply involved in the privatisation of land, but at the same time, the state was also worried about the consequences of this process for its tax base, i.e. the peasants. Especially in the late-seventeenth and late-eighteenth centuries, landowners frequently were able to 'hide' peasants from the state and its tax collectors on their *çiflik*s. Because the central government was not able to stop the sale of peasant land in the first place, at least it attempted to ensure that peasants continued to pay taxes to the state, even if they worked on *çiflik* land.³⁹¹

At the beginning of the Tanzimat, the Ottoman central government first addressed the tax side of the social and economic problems of the countryside by trying to implement a just collection of the tithe by government officials instead of tax farmers. Moreover, the government also intervened in the 'private' economic relations between *çiflik* owners and their sharecroppers by outlawing labour duties (*angarya*) and certain additional fees and charges the peasants had to pay to their landlords. Throughout the empire, local arrangements showed a high degree of variation. It was especially this part of the reform program that kindled high hopes among the peasant population and led to the 1841 tax revolt when these hopes were not immediately realised.³⁹²

When it turned out that a quick reform of the tax system was impossible – after the collected taxes sharply decreased, the old system of tax farming was reintroduced – the government intensified its reform of landownership and the

389 Christo Gandev, 'L'apparition des rapports capitalistes dans l'économie rurale de la Bulgarie du nord-ouest au cours du XVIIIe siècle', *Etudes Historiques* 1 (1960): 220; Aytekin, 'Peasant Protest', 197–201.

390 Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 121–170.

391 *Ibid.*, 146–152.

392 İnalcık, 'Application of the Tanzimat', 97–115.

struggle against its negative social effects. This came also as a reaction to periodic peasant revolts that continued to erupt in all parts of the empire, e.g. in Vidin in 1850, in the Trabzon region in the late 1840s and early 1850s as well as in Mount Lebanon in the late 1850s.³⁹³ One regional focus for the reform of agrarian relations was Bosnia, where the government initiated a series of inspections, which resulted in three local land codes in the two decades following the proclamation of the Tanzimat. These codes attempted to standardise the arrangements between landowners and sharecroppers in certain regions; they prescribed the rights and responsibilities of the parties involved and prohibited certain abuses.³⁹⁴

After the 1841 revolt, the land question remained constantly on the political agenda in the region of Niš. In his *Notes (Tezâkir)* on the important events during his time as the official historian of the empire, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha gives an account of the development of the *çiftlik* question in this region.³⁹⁵ According to Cevdet, quarrels and litigations around *çiftlik*s broke out again in the mid-1840s, when the last *timars* were discontinued. In this situation a group of *sipahis* in the Leskovac district tried to convert some of the villages on their *timars* into *çiftlik*s against the opposition of the villagers. This also inspired the sharecroppers of the already-existing *çiftlik*s in the area to protest against their status, arguing that their villages had been subjected to the same illegal procedure in the past. According to Cevdet, they were supported in this demand by the bishop of Niš, Kalinikos. The confrontation led to a series of litigations in local courts as well as in Istanbul and was additionally fanned by political activists, some of whom were supported by Serbia. Also, the lenient position of the Ottoman government in the Vidin revolt encouraged the sharecroppers of Niš in their determination to get rid of the *çiftlik* system altogether.

These ongoing litigations and protests were countered by the landowners of the Niš district with a petition in which they asserted the ancient rights of their ownership by title deeds (*tapu*).³⁹⁶

To deal with this conflict, in 1858 the government in Istanbul decided to send a special official to the province to investigate the matter and find a solution in

393 Aytekin, 'Peasant Protest'.

394 Tefîk Güran and Ahmet Uzun, 'Bosna-Hersek'te Toprak Rejimi: Eshâb-ı Alaka ve Çiftçiler Arasındaki İlişkiler', *Belleten* 259 (2006): 867–902.

395 Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir* 13–20, ed. Cavid Baysun (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), 105–109. Ahmed Cevdet reiterates an argument made by Grand Vizier Kırışlı Mehmed Emin Pasha in a letter sent in 1859 from Niš during his famous inspection tour (for which, see below). Also see Jelena Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy: Property in Transition to Nation-State in Post-Ottoman Niš' (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2020), 50–53.

396 MVL 885/59, doc. 1, 27 Receb 1274 (13 March 1858).

collaboration with the governor of Niš province, Zeynelabidin Pasha. As a result, all of the court cases were settled and two land codes for the districts of Niš and Leskovac were prepared.³⁹⁷ They acknowledged the legality of the *çiftlik* contracts in principle, but they also took care to fix the rights and responsibilities of landowners and sharecroppers in greater detail than before. In its first paragraph, the code stated once again that labour duties (*angarya*) in any form or name were illegal. The code was signed by the big landowners of Niš and Leskovac.

According to Cevdet, however, this mediation was only partly successful, mainly because the local authorities kept its results secret. For this obstruction as well as other cases of corruption the governor of Niš and other local officials were deposed two years later by Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Pasha while he was on an inspection tour in Ottoman Europe. Only then was the new *çiftlik* code properly publicised and also translated into ‘Bulgarian’ as Cevdet calls it, i.e. the local Slavic dialect.

In his analysis, Cevdet is clearly on the side of the Muslim landowners and stresses their legal right to their estates. He admits that there were exceptional cases of exploitation, but states that the general rejection of the system by the peasants was not justified. In a perfidious argument, Cevdet even relates such exploitation back to the Christian elite. When the Christian notables (sing. *kocabaşı*) started to acquire *çiftliks* of their own, they began to press the peasants for more money. According to Cevdet, this behaviour was an expression of the notables professional background as merchants – a behaviour that was then imitated by some greedy Muslim landlords.

Cevdet generally displays the same negative attitude towards the Christian community leaders that the Ottoman inspectors had already put forward in 1841. His analysis is prejudiced, but it seems to reflect the new forms of collaboration between the local elites of Muslims and Christians that developed in the new local and regional councils and also became manifest in business relations. A case about the sale of the four *çiftlik* villages of Berčinac, Krupac, Pasi Poljana and Belibreg in the district of Niš illustrates the context of the litigations mentioned above.³⁹⁸ Originally, these villages belonged to Esma Hanım, the mother of a Belgrade notable, who sold them in 1855 for 200,000 *kuruş* to two brothers from Niš. The buyers were Yakovalı Ali and Molla İslam, who possibly originated from the merchant network from Gjakova mentioned earlier that ran the export trade towards the Adriatic. The exact origin of the family and of their wealth remains to be discovered. A merchant background is not unlikely, since the broker and maybe

397 İ..MMS. 14/598, doc. 4–5, 26 Şaban 1275 (31 March 1859).

398 See the documentation in MVL 312/43, 18 Rabiulevvel 1274 (6 November 1857).

also the financier of the *çiftlik* deal was the 'trusted Belgrade merchant' Anastas veled-i Hristodulo. He was the elder brother of Nikola, whom we have already encountered above as a member of one of a leading merchant families of Niš.³⁹⁹

However, the ninety-one families of sharecroppers living in the four villages contested the sale. Apparently, they had planned to buy the land themselves and now claimed that Esma Hanım had somehow made false promises and then cheated them. They resisted the plan of the new owners to exchange them with new sharecroppers and opened a lawsuit in Istanbul. It seems that it was contested whether the sharecroppers had a right to a *baştına*, i.e. a plot that was part of the *çiftlik* but that they were entitled to pass on within their family.⁴⁰⁰ This and similar cases caused the government to send the special envoy to the districts of Niš and Leskovac for the enquiry already mentioned above.

This official investigation not only dealt with the disputed cases and drew up a local land code, but also undertook a general assessment of the *çiftlik* institution in the two districts. This sheds more light on the local pattern of landownership. According to the final report⁴⁰¹ of the investigation submitted in December 1858 by Governor Zeynelabidin and the inspector from Istanbul, of the 164 villages in the *kaza* of Niš, 60 were located on state land. Therefore, they only paid the regular tithe to the treasury. In contrast, 102 were *çiftlik* villages whose Christian sharecroppers paid one ninth of the produce to their landlords (*eshab-ı alaka*) as rent (*ücret-i arazi*) after the deduction of the tithe. The rate of 82 per cent *çiftlik* villages in the district is exceptionally high. For nineteenth-century Macedonia, scholars have estimated a ratio of *çiftliks* of one half to two thirds of all villages; in the sub-province of Salonika, it was estimated to be no higher than 42 per cent.⁴⁰²

Apart from this general information, the report also reflected on the historical origin of this particular structure of landownership. According to 'knowledgeable people', some owners had already been in possession of their *çiftliks* for a long time, as their title deeds and *hüccets*, i.e. documents issued by the local *kadı*, proved. Others had acquired their title deeds at the time when the Habsburg

399 Dušan J. Popović, *O Cincarima: Prilozi pitanju postanka našeg građanskog društva* (Belgrade: Prometej, 2008, first ed. 1937), 471.

400 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 44. A similar conflict in the village of Donji Barbeš (Zir Barbeš) is analysed in Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, 'The Ottoman Agrarian Question and the Making of Property and Crime in Nineteenth Century', in *Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies*, ed. Elias Kolovos (Rethymno: University of Crete Press, 2015), 314–315.

401 İ.MMS. 14/598, doc. 1, 6 Cemazeyilevvel 1275 (12 December 1858).

402 Donald Quataert, 'The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914', in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2, 1600–1914, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 873.

armies had attacked Niš and the Christian peasants had left the region when the Habsburgs retreated again. In this situation, state land had been handed over with a title deed to those who promised to develop (*imar*) it. Such helpers (*ahfad*) also were assigned peasants from outside and seeds and oxen and other equipment to start farming. They remained in possession of these new *çiftlik*s, bequeathed them to their children or sold them to others. The report closes its historical analysis by admitting that other *çiftlik*s were established directly from peasants' land who sold it with permission of the *sipahi* because of poverty or because they had to seek protection against oppression (*taaddi*). This mix of legal and illegal ways of forming a *çiftlik* pointed out in the report in many ways confirms the scholarly research quoted above. In particular, the situation in Niš was characterised by the wars in the eighteenth century, which resulted in the depopulation of the region and the special arrangements afterwards to restart agriculture.

The report goes on to stress that the *çiftlik*s in the district of Niš were owned by men and women, Muslims and Christian, in single or shared ownership. This claim is confirmed by a list of all *çiftlik*s in the district included in the report. The ownership of the 102 *çiftlik*s in the district was spread quite widely among at least 75 persons, some holding several *çiftlik*s, others only a share of half or a third of a *çiftlik*. Among the owners were 15 women, who were often the wives or daughters of other owners. There were also five Christian *çiftlik* owners, of whom four bore the title *kocabaşı*. Among them were the members of the Christian merchant elite, which stood out already in the censuses in the 1840s, such as Kranyalı Đorđe (probably the son of Anastas from Kranya), Kir Kosto, the brother of Nikola Hristodulo's father-in-law, and one Sotiraki, whose claim to the *çiftlik* was under investigation because he was abroad, in Vienna. It seems that the vast majority of the owners, Christians and Muslims alike, were resident in the *kaza*. Only a handful lived in Leskovac, Prokuplje, Bosnia and Albania. Because they were not present to show their title deeds to the inspector, a further investigation was ordered.

Among the multitude of owners, some individuals and families stand out for the number of *çiftlik*s in their possession. At the top position was the second generation of the Hafızpaşazade family, the two brothers Bekir Bey and Ahmed Bey, sons of Mahmud Pasha. Together the brothers owned half of the shares of 15 *çiftlik*s. The other half had belonged to their uncle Ali, who had died without an heir, and so the inspector ordered an investigation to whom these vacant shares would fall. The family's properties were concentrated along the road to Belgrade up to the border of the district with Aleksinac in villages such as Čamurlija, Vrtište, Mezgraja, Donja Toponica, where the Hafızpaşazades also owned a khan, and Draževac (see fig. 6.2). In Medoševac, a village close to Niš on the site where the airport is located today, the Hafızpaşazade family owned a stone tower, a *kule*, with a belvedere next to a *konak*. As in other parts of the Balkans, the absentee

landlords of Niš usually lived in the city that formed the centre of the natural region and therefore their estates were not developed as living places. Medoševac is an exception because of its suburban location.⁴⁰³ Another concentration of the family's landholdings was in the Morava floodplain immediately west of Niš, in villages such as Lalinac, Novo Selo (today Deveti Maj) and Međurovo. Additionally, the brothers held shares of five other *çiftliks*.

All the other *çiftlik*-owning families had much smaller landholdings. There were the already-mentioned four units Molla İslam and his brother Yakovalı Ali had bought in the years immediately preceding the inspection. In contrast to these newcomers, the four *çiftliks* and one third of the shares of another unit that Hacı Mustafa Ağa owned had been in his possession for a long time. They were already recorded in the 1845 Wealth Survey, where Hacı Mustafa was designated as a landowner (*eshab-ı alaka*) residing in the quarter of Taşköprü.⁴⁰⁴ The same can be said of the four *çiftliks* the former *kadımolla* of Niš, Abdurrahman Efendi, owned in partnership with Mufti Mustafa Efendi in 1845.⁴⁰⁵ Twenty years later, the *molla*'s daughters had inherited them.

In total, only 30 *çiftliks* from the 1858 list were also present in the earlier Wealth Survey. This has to do with the incomplete sample of the Wealth Survey; most prominently, the *çiftliks* of the Hafızpaşazades were missing. Moreover, some of the *çiftlik* owners might not appear there simply because they did not live in Niš. A look at the Wealth Survey registers of the single village would probably reveal the complete ownership structure and could answer the crucial question of whether the absolute number of *çiftliks* increased in the years between 1845 and 1858.

Another document allows us to look 20 years into the future from the investigation of 1858. In spring 1880 when Niš was part of Serbia, a list of all former *çiftliks* in the district was drawn up by a special envoy and the Ottoman consul in Niš.⁴⁰⁶ The survey was part of the ongoing negotiations for compensation between

403 Richard Busch-Zantner, *Agrarverfassung und Siedlung in Südosteuropa unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Türkenzeit* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1938), 142–150. Felix Kanitz visited the place when it already had passed into the possession of a Serbian general after 1878. Felix Kanitz, *Das Königreich Serbien und das Serbenvolk von der Römerzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 2, *Land und Bevölkerung* (Leipzig: Meyer, 1909), 176.

404 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11101, p. 7, no. 10.

405 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 16403, p. 2, no. 1.

406 HR.SYS. 1452/1, 'Suret-i Niş kazası dahilinde bulunan çiftlikat', enclosed in J. Nicolaidès to foreign minister, Niš, 1/19 April 1880. In fact, there are two lists with slight differences mostly concerning the numbers. The following discussion uses the second version corrected by Nicholaides. The Ottoman government also translated and shared this list with the British Foreign Office. This version was published by Kemal H. Karpat, 'The Ottoman Land System

the Ottoman Empire, Serbia and the European Powers after Serbia had annexed the area in 1878. In contrast to the inspection of 1858, the list not only gives the name of the *çiflik*s and their owners, but also their yearly return and the number of sharecropper's households on them as well as their size. In the context of the post-war compensation claims, these numbers must be taken with a pinch of salt. Apparently, the list was mainly drawn up with the help of some Muslims who had remained in Niš even after the takeover by Serbia. It is not clear whether they reconstructed the ownership structure of the district purely from memory or if they had other documentation at hand. With these shortcomings in mind, the 1880 *çiflik* list will round off our discussion of the structure of landownership and elite formation.

As a general picture, the 1880 list shows that landownership patterns in Niš did not change significantly during the last two decades of Ottoman rule. With 99 *çiflik*s and four apiaries (*kovanlık*) the number and the location of the units had stayed approximately the same. According to the calculation of the list, they produced a yearly rent of 12,650,000 *kuruş*, they comprised 3,385 sharecropper's households, and their total size was 800,000 *dönüm*.⁴⁰⁷ This means that the average size of a *çiflik* was slightly below 8,000 *dönüm* (735 hectares); the biggest unit had 20,000 the smallest just 1,000 *dönüm*. Again, this size is above average compared to other Ottoman regions such as Macedonia where the average *çiflik* was no larger than 25 to 50 hectares or the Vidin area where they ranged from 30 to 500 hectares.⁴⁰⁸ Only in Teke in Southwest Anatolia at the beginning of the nineteenth century do we find a similar average *çiflik* size as in Niš.⁴⁰⁹

As before, ownership was dispersed among a relatively large group of at least 80 persons, among them 15 Muslim women and seven Christians. Except for

and Turkish Land Holdings in the Sanjak of Nish, 1876–1879', in *Méditerranée, Moyen Orient: Deux Siècles de Relations Internationales*, ed. Walid Arbid (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 133–144. However, because the nineteenth-century translator of the document did not know the Ottoman names of the local villages, this version is difficult to use.

⁴⁰⁷ Calculating with the Ottoman standard *dönüm* this equals 73,544 hectare or 735.44 square kilometres; with the Yugoslavian *donum* it is 56,000 ha and 560 sq. kilometres. According to a rough calculation on Google Earth the *kaza* of Niš comprised an area of 1,000 square kilometres. However, we should not take these numbers too literally. To my knowledge, in Ottoman times there was never a scientific land survey in the area, so it seems reasonable to assume that the landlords estimated the *çiflik* sizes, which were probably more or less accurate in their relative position to one another and in relation to the average income they produced.

⁴⁰⁸ McGowan, *Economic Life*, 72; Gandev, 'L'apparition des rapports capitalistes', 208.

⁴⁰⁹ Halil İnalçık, 'The Emergence of Big Farms, *Çiflik*s: State, Landlords, and Tenants', in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 26.

Kranyalı Dörde, we see only new names among the Christian *çiftlik* owners. In general, the structure of landownership was not static, but at least 50 per cent of the units still had the same owner as twenty years earlier or had been passed on to the former owners' direct heirs. The continuity was strongest with the big landowning families. The Hafızpaşazades, Mahmud Pasha's son Ahmed Bey and Bekir Bey's sons Mustafa and Nihat, retained their top position. With around 80,000 *dönüm*, they owned one tenth of all *çiftlik* land in the district. Their units were basically the same as twenty years earlier, including the biggest in the sample, 20,000 *dönüm* in Draževac, a village at the northern border of the *kaza*.

The holdings of the other bigger landowning families we have presented above were also still largely intact. Molla İslam and his brother or perhaps his two sons, Halil and Ali – the two versions of the list are not consistent – still held the four villages mentioned above and had acquired two additional *çiftliks*. In a similar way, Hacı Mustafa Ağa retained all his units. With over 40,000 *dönüm*, both families belonged to the second tier of landowners in the district. They were joined by the only newcomer among the big landowners, Şükriye Hanım, who owned 48,000 *dönüm* in eight different places. Three of the four *çiftliks* she held in single ownership had previously belonged to Osmanbeyzade Mustafa Bey, who was the grandson of Salima Hatun, the rich widow we encountered in the Wealth Survey, so possibly, Şükriye was Mustafa's daughter or wife who had inherited her father's or husband's possessions.

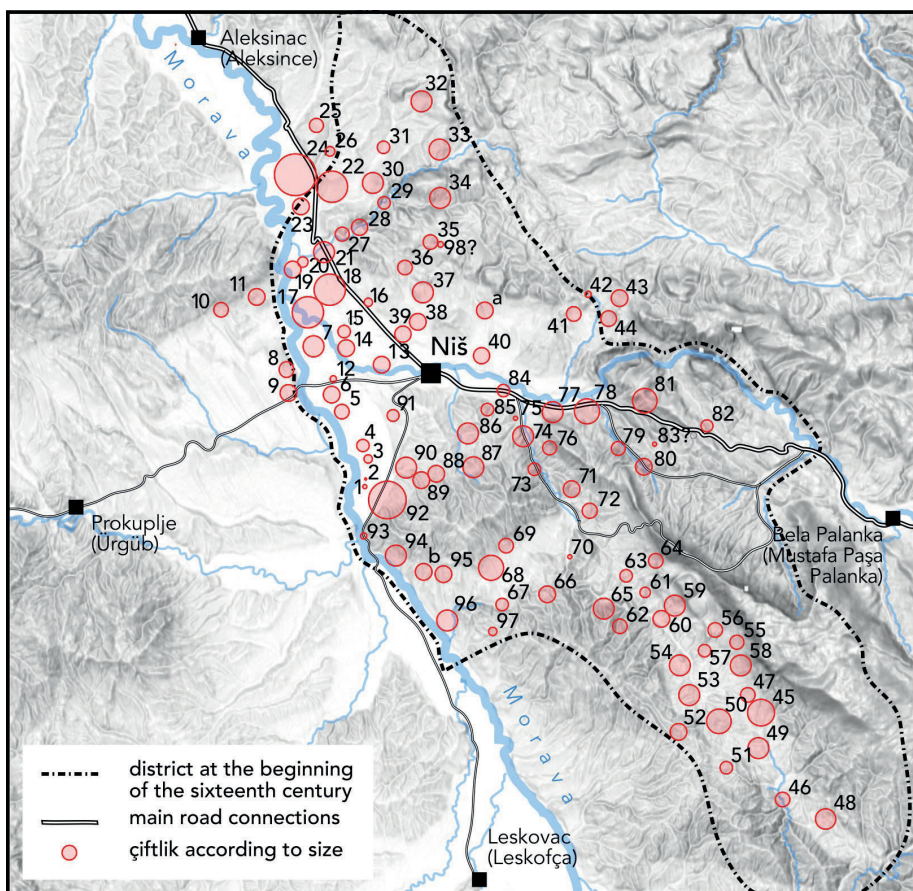


Fig. 6.2: *Çiftlik*s in the kaza of Niš before 1878. From the list of claims compiled by the Ottoman consul in 1880. Carthography by Florian Riedler. The numbers on the map refer to the following villages: 1 Čapljina, 2 Gurovac, 3 Belotinci, 4 Gornji Medjurovo, 5 Donja Medjurovo, 6 Čokot, 7 Lalinac, 8 Krušci, 9 Mramor and Potok, 10 Dudulajce, 11 Sečanica, 12 Novoselo (Deveti Maj), 13 Medoševac, 14 Popovac, 15 Milaševac, 16 Čamurlu, 17 Trupale, 18 Vrtište, 19 Mezgraja, 20 Amam, 21 Donja Toponica, 22 Gornja Trnava, 23 Donja Trnava, 24 Draževac, 25 Donja Krupac, 26 Belibreg, 27 Berčinac, 28 Paljina, 29 Miljkovac, 30 Veljopolje, 31 Paligradce, 32 Vrelo, 33 Kravlje, 34 Cerje, 35 Leskovik (?), 36 Rujnik, 37 Hum, 38 Gornja Komren, 39 Donja Komren, 40, Donja Vrežina, 41 Jasenovik, 42 Vrelo, 43 Oreovac, 44 Pasyača, 45 Veliki Krčimir, 46 Gornji Prisjam, 47 Mali Krčimir, 48 Zavidince, 49 Ravna Dubrava, 50 Liče, 51 Komarica, 52 Stupnica, 53 Gornje Dragovlje, 54 Donje Dragovlje, 55 Šebet, 56 Kaletinac, 57 Ofsinjinac, 58 Gornja Vrtop, 59 Gornji Dušnik, 60 Donji Dušnik, 61 Miljkovac, 62 Gare, 63 Dugapoljana, 64 Čelije, 65 Krastače, 66 Gornje Vlasse, 67 Donji Barbeš, 68 Gornji Barbeš, 69 Vilandrica, 70 Marina Kutina, 71 Draškovo Kutina (Taskovići), 72 Prokopona Kutina (Gadžin Han), 73 Lazar, 74 Eminova Kutina (Prvi Kutina), 75 Kutina apiary, 76 Radikina Bara and Koritnjak, 77 Banja, 78 Jelašnica, 79 Čukljenik, 80 Studena, 81 Kunovica, 82 Ravni Do, 83 Mezra or Koska apiary, 84 Brzibrod, 85 Suvi Do, 86 Grabovac, 87 Berbatovo, 88 Vlasi, 89 Perutina, 90 Djurlina, 91 Pasi Poljana, 92 Malosište, 93 Klisura, 94 Čečinam, 95 Dukat, 96 Toponica, 97 Novoselo, 98 Gornji Leskovik, a Matejevac, b Rusna.

In conclusion, what does the development of *çiftlik* ownership between 1845 and 1880 tell us about the urban elite of Niš and the significance of landownership in nineteenth-century Ottoman society? As we have already seen in the Wealth Survey of 1845, landownership was a common source of wealth for the urban upper classes. All of the more affluent Christian inhabitants of the city had private property of gardens and fields, from which they derived a considerable part of their income. However, usually they owned no more than three to ten *dönüm*. This was also the case for many Muslims, but among them there was also a group with larger landholdings. These were people designated as professional farmers (*erbab-ı ziraat*) who owned 30–120 *dönüm* of private fields they partly rented out. Some of them also owned *çiftlik*s, usually no more than one or two units.⁴¹⁰ Some of the *sipahis* in the Wealth Survey also fit this profile, while others had invested in urban property such as shops.⁴¹¹

Besides these professional landowners, the Wealth Survey indicates that a few urban professionals such as three merchants, the owner of a *hamam*, a medrese student, a servant of the court, a craftsman, and two artillerists as well as the *molla* of Niš owned *çiftlik*s.⁴¹²

The extant sample of the Wealth Survey only mentions four big landowners, designated as *eshab-ı alaka*. They had two to six *çiftlik*s and up to 600 *dönüm* of privately owned fields.⁴¹³ Considering the shares in six *çiftlik*s he owned not only in Niš but also in the neighbouring districts, an agricultural director (*ziraat müdürü*) who was also mentioned in the Wealth Survey can be counted in this category of large landowners.⁴¹⁴

The inspection report of 1858 as well as the survey of 1880 confirm how common and lucrative *çiftlik* ownership remained. Although the data of the Wealth Survey is incomplete and difficult to compare with the later sources, it seems that the base of this form of investment broadened. Besides the big landowners, a gentry that was also involved in local politics, as the next section will show in

410 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11036, p. 4, no. 6; p. 5, no. 10; p. 7, no. 13, no. 15; p. 20, no. 86; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11059, p. 5, no. 9–10; p. 13, no. 23–24, p. 14, no. 26; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11082, p. 4, no. 2–3; p. 10, no. 31; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11101, p. 4, no. 3; p. 11, no. 24; p. 18, no. 51; p. 24, no. 68.

411 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11036, p. 7, no. 14; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11101, p. 5, no. 5; p. 6, no. 7; p. 12, no. 25; p. 15, no. 37; p. 20, no. 56 and no. 60; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11172, p. 7, no. 39.

412 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11036, p. 15, no. 63; p. 17, no. 72; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11082, p. 4, no. 3; p. 5, no. 4, p. 12, no. 40; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11101, p. 8, no. 11; p. 9, no. 17; p. 22, no. 62; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 16403, p. 2, no. 1; p. 6, no. 12; p. 14, no. 47.

413 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11036, p. 2, no. 1; p. 5, no. 11; ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11101, p. 7, no. 10; p. 22, no. 64.

414 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 16403, p. 5, no. 11.

greater detail, there was a larger group of investors in land who profited from the commercialisation of Ottoman agriculture. Because of new legislation, women and non-Muslims entered the ranks of *çiftlik* owners. Muslim women gained the right to inherit land from their fathers in 1847 and, as the documents analysed above shows, this new instrument was used relatively widely.⁴¹⁵

From a macro-sociological perspective, Kemal Karpat addressed the group of landowners as a new Muslim middle class whose main economic basis was the private ownership of agricultural land. This class formed in the second half of the nineteenth century in the towns and cities of the interior in Anatolia and the Balkans. In general, it supported the reform policy of the central state, but was culturally more conservative than the bureaucratic elite, so that it became the dominant force in Ottoman society only at the turn of the nineteenth century under Sultan Abdülhamid (r. 1876–1909).⁴¹⁶

As Attila Aytekin has argued, the landowners were successfully imprinting their economic interests on the legal framework of the Tanzimat state. As the prime example for this mechanism, he cites the Ottoman Land Code, which was promulgated in 1858, the same year as the local *çiftlik* code for Niš and Leskovac was drawn up. On the one hand, the Land Code upheld the legal fiction of the inalienable nature of state land, but on the other hand, with many of its stipulations concerning the sale and inheritance of land, accepted its commodification. Most importantly, the Land Code acknowledged *çiftlik* ownership as a distinct form of private property in arable land.⁴¹⁷ Unlike in other parts of the empire where the law did bring in a new dynamic, in Niš the privatisation of land had already been concluded before and the situation did not change significantly until the end of Ottoman rule.

Overall, the 1841 peasant revolt and the subsequent attempts at agrarian reform point to the close relationship between land and territory in the Ottoman context. Mapping, regulating and standardising landownership was an important technique in the formation of territory as an economic space whose surplus could be taxed by the state. For that, like people, land together with its property relations also had to be made legible to the state. Historically, all early modern states had tried with often only limited success to lead surveys that would result in cadastral maps indicating not only size and owners of land, but also its quality.

415 E. Attila Aytekin, 'Agrarian Relations, Property and Law: An Analysis of the Land Code of 1858 in the Ottoman Empire', *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 6 (2009): 940.

416 Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 91–96.

417 Aytekin, 'Agrarian Relations', 943–944.

Such cadastral maps not only made the land taxable, but turned it into an object that could be sold and bought more easily.⁴¹⁸

The Tanzimat as a project of state centralisation tried many of these techniques that aimed at creating a territory and a population to be governed. As the preceding chapter has shown, the most urgent goal in the censuses of the 1840s was information gathering. However, the fact that particularly the Wealth Survey, which also registered landownership, was never put to use shows the limits of this policy. Accordingly, the approach to *çiftlik* ownership was more modest and consisted mainly of a standardisation and homogenisation of the contracts between landowners and sharecroppers to avoid social conflict. Beyond that, the Ottoman government was never in a position to tax the *çiftlik* land effectively because for want of a cadastre, it simply lacked information on the landholdings. Still, in the 1870s the government was running a campaign to update title deeds and reissue them as standardised forms.⁴¹⁹

6.2 Urban Governance

In contrast to the sometimes-violent conflict between the peasants and the landowners, urban life in the early decades of the Tanzimat was largely peaceful. As the previous analysis has shown, in the city, social and religious boundaries could not easily be translated into confrontation. Mechanisms of urban governance to keep the peace as well as the willingness of the urban community to act for the common good of the city were well established. This becomes apparent when examining a variety of urban construction projects such as that of building a new church in 1850, of renewing and extending the fortress in 1854, of opening of a new type of state school (*rüşdiye*) in 1856 and of the cleaning of the moats surrounding the city in 1859. These building projects highlight the central aspect of development (*imar*) as an important practical goal, but also an element of the ideology of the central state in the Tanzimat era. In this way, they were a way to inscribe power relations into the cityscape. Moreover, public building projects offer a perspective on the way imperial and local authorities and different sections of the urban elites as well as the population collaborated on concrete issues and how they divided responsibilities and areas of competences among each other.

418 Charles S. Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 82–132; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 33–45.

419 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 62–63.

From an institutional perspective, urban governance during the Tanzimat era was conducted through the new system of provincial administration that the central government introduced after 1839 in order to implement the announced reform measures. At the heart of this administrative system was a hierarchical set of councils that were composed of members of the military, civilian local officials and local Muslim notables (*vücut-i memleket*) as well as members from the non-Muslim communities such as bishops or other community leaders (*kocabaşı*).⁴²⁰ These councils could decide matters concerning local administration, finances and infrastructure and could also hear lesser juridical cases. The various reorganisations of provincial administration in the 1840s and 1850s mainly concerned the composition of these councils and the competences of their members, some of whom were appointed by the government, others of whom were ex-officio members, and yet others elected by the people from among the local elite.⁴²¹ These councils operated on the level of the district (*kaza*), sub-province (*sancak*) or province (*eyalet*). A proper municipal council was introduced in Niš only in the 1860s, as we will see in the next section.

Parallel to the council, 'concerted action'⁴²² of urban elites for the benefit of their specific clientele or the city as a whole was a second important mechanism of urban politics. The instances of urban development that this section will focus on have also been chosen because they are examples of such concerted action that was expressed through collective petitions. As in similar cases in other Ottoman cities, these petitions give us a good impression of the composition of urban elites of Niš as well as their self-representation vis-à-vis the central government. At the same time, such documents give a privileged insight into petitioning as a basic mechanism of Ottoman urban governance that continued to function as a negotiated process between agents of the central government and local elites.⁴²³

420 İnalçık, 'Application of the Tanzimat', 99–101.

421 Nizam Önen and Cenk Reyhan, *Mülkten Ülkeye: Türkiye'de Taşra İdaresinin Dönüşümü (1839–1929)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2011), 115–153; Stanford J. Shaw, 'The Origins of Representative Government in the Ottoman Empire: An Introduction to the Provincial Councils, 1839–1876', in *Studies in Ottoman and Turkish History: Life with the Ottomans* (Istanbul: Isis, 2000), 183–231.

422 Christoph K. Neumann, 'Ottoman Provincial Towns in the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (Würzburg: Ergon, 2002), 138.

423 Nora Lafi, 'Petitions and Accommodating Urban Change in the Ottoman Empire', in *Istanbul as Seen from a Distance: Centre and Provinces in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga, Sait Özervarlı, and Feryal Tansug (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2011), 73–82.

As the first example for urban modernisation, we will discuss the overhaul of the fortress in the first half of the 1850s. It was one of the periodic restorations necessary to maintain its military value since it had been built in the 1720s. This overhaul of the fortifications was executed in a very similar way as earlier: over a period of several years, the ramparts of the old fortress were repaired and a number of new buildings, most visibly a new governor's palace (*konak*), and some military installations were built. The major innovation was the construction of five outlying bastions (*tabya*) placed at a distance to the fortress guarding its northern approach.

This round of repair and extension became an issue of urban politics because in addition to the Ottoman military and the central administration, the inhabitants of Niš were also involved to a considerable degree. This becomes clear from two collective petitions⁴²⁴ that stand out from among the documentation a large-scale restoration project like this normally created such as inspection reports and detailed budgets. Marking the completion of the works on the fortress and describing in detail the festivities for the inauguration of the bastions, both petitions are styled as messages of gratitude to the sultan sent by the citizens of Niš, more specifically 'the learned and righteous (*ulema ve sulaha*), the officers (*zabitan*) and notables (*vücuḥ-ı memleket*), Muslims (*ahali-i İslam*) and non-Muslims (*reaya*)' as it is spelled out in the introduction of one of the petitions. This hierarchy was reproduced by the over one hundred seals at the bottom of the document: the initial section containing 71 signatories from the Muslim urban elite starts with the imams and the *muhtars* of the different Muslim quarters together with other Islamic functionaries such as three sheikhs of Sufi convents and two teachers (*müderri*s). Other influential groups such as merchants (*tüccar*) and landowners (*eshab-ı alaka*) as well as some unspecified elders (*ibtıyār*) follow. The two rows of 18 Christian signatories start (at the left-hand side of the document) with the seal of the bishop's deputy (*vekil-i metropolid*) two seals of Christian notables (*kocabaşı*) followed by a number of unspecified seals, some of them in Cyrillic and some in Ottoman script. At the very bottom of the document, nine Jewish signatures with seals in Hebrew script are positioned. Finally, running along the right margin of the document, there is a section of 16 signatories, all of them Ottoman Muslim officials, who also formed the majority in the local council. These are the financial officer (*mal müdürü*), the judge of the sharia court, the mufti, two secretaries, a group of notables (*vücuḥ*) and a number of unspecified council members (*aza*).

Judging from their contents, the real function of these petitions was to highlight the local contribution to the restoration project consisting mainly in providing

424 İ..DH.. 303/19233, 28 Şevval 1270 (24 July 1854), documents 2 and 3. Both are very similar and vary only slightly regarding the contents as well as the signatories.

labour on a large scale. We have already seen that this was common practice, although in the past it had usually been peasants who were forced by the state to work on fortifications. It is not transparent how in mid-nineteenth century Niš the state could secure the commitment of its citizens. The petitions allude to Governor (*mutasarrıf*) Ismail Pasha's as well as the local council members' 'successive encouragements and efforts' (*teşvikat ve ikdamat-ı mütevaliye*). But how much force was involved in the negotiation and what kinds of deals were struck between the notables in the council, the governor and possibly other representatives of the central government is impossible to say. The petitions could be interpreted as the final result of such negotiations, as a way for the inhabitants of Niš to obtain official recognition for their contributions that the documents spell out in detail.

The labour provided by the inhabitants of the city first concerned the fortress proper, whose ramparts had to be newly plastered under the supervision of Ahmed Efendi, lieutenant in the fortification corps. As a result, the petitions stated, 'by rendering our free service, public savings were protected in every way, so that at little cost [the fortress] was repaired and became strong again.' Moreover, the petitions highlighted the citizens' contribution in a second project:

The superintendent of education at the Imperial School of Engineering Captain Schmit and Mr. Blum, who had arrived here earlier on an official mission, explored the construction of bastions outside the fortress. And from their proposals four big bastions were dug out and built up with the active assistance of the regular soldiers, the soldiers of the reserve and all Muslims, Christians and Jews together.⁴²⁵

The petitions goes on to describe the ceremonial inauguration of these bastions, involving a triple cheer 'Long live the Sultan!', the firing of 21 cannons and the sacrifice of an animal by the governor with the participation of all citizens, big and small, including Muslim, Christian and Jewish schoolchildren.

A look at a nineteenth-century Ottoman map⁴²⁶ showing the new military installations north of the fortress reveals yet another means of recognition for

425 İ.DH.. 303/19233, doc. 2: '[...] bir hizmet-i müftümüz olmak üzere her cihetle tassarıfat-ı miriye reayet olunarak masarıfat-ı kalile ile mücedded makamında rasın ve metin olmak üzere tamir ve inşa ve itıam olunmuş olduğu veçhile mukaddemce bilmemuriye bu canibe vürud eden mühendishane-i berriye ders nazırı kapudan Şmit me mösyö Blum kullarının kale-i merkume haricinde hafr ve inşasını keşf eyledikleri tabyalardan dahi asker-i müzaffa ve redife-i cenab-ı mülukane ile bilcümle İslam ve reaya ve Yahud'ın iane-i fiiliyeleryile büyük olarak dört adet tabya hafr ve inşa olunduğundan [...]'.
426 HRT.h.. 2158. The hand-drawn coloured plan is not dated.

the citizens' labour. The names given to the bastions refer to the various groups contributing to the construction project: The People's Bastion (Ahali Tabyası) situated ca. 500 m along the Belgrade road was the one nearest to the fortress. A bit further to the north on the road leading towards the village of Hum lay the Bastion of the Reserve (Redif Tabyası). The most outlying bastion at two to three kilometres distance to the fortress was named Mecidiye Tabyası in honour of Sultan Abdülmecid, the reigning sultan. The governor also seems to have contributed to the works, so the bastion guarding the road towards the hill of Vinik in the north was named İsmail Paşa Tabyası. Finally, to the east of the fortress guarding the village of Jagodin, we find Nizamiye Tabyası, recalling the contribution of the regular troops (*nizam*).

In conclusion, we see how the upkeep of a central piece of security infrastructure relied heavily on local contributions. For financial reasons, the central government had to mobilise its subjects, who were willing to contribute to the renovation project in return for an official recognition of their efforts. The mustering of public resources that in this case was an extraordinary measure also functioned similarly in more mundane circumstances, as the next example will show.

In summer 1859 the inhabitants of Niš drew up and forwarded to the grand vizier a common report (*mazbata-ı umumi*) about their intention to clean the city moats.⁴²⁷ In spring the river Nišava had flooded the city, damaging many houses, shops and storehouses. The water had also filled the inner and outer moats of the left bank city, from where it could not run off because the moats were silted in many places. With rising temperatures, the stagnant water started to rot and emitted putrid fumes that were suspected of spreading illness in the city. In the face of this threat to public health, the inhabitants, Muslims and non-Muslims together, agreed to take matters into their own hands and to clean the moats as was announced in the report.

The character of unanimity the report conveys is also expressed by its signatories, about one hundred community leaders, which belong to an equal part to the Muslim and Christian sides. The Muslim signatories are composed of the city elites such as notables, followed by a number of *ulema*, sufi sheikhs and imams as well as a larger group of landowners, merchants and unspecified elders. The Christian signatories, who are located at the bottom of the document, are headed by what was probably the bishop's representative, judging from the very elaborate but unfortunately illegible seal in Ottoman. What follows are an unspecified number of signatories who may be identical with the members of the bishop's

427 İ.DH.. 441/29101, doc. 1 (n.d.), the entire dossier is dated 26 Muharrem 1276 (25 August 1859).

council that represented the Christian municipal organisation, the *varoş*. Only one of these signatories in the first group is identical with the petitions discussed previously. The body of the Christians signatories is a mixed group of craftsmen such as grocers (*bakal*), tailors (*terzi*) and candlemakers (*mumçî*) and unspecified signatories, many of whom did not possess a seal but instead left a fingerprint. In this group there are also a few more prominent community members such as the teacher (*gramatiki*), the head of the *varoş* (*mahale başî*) and the head of the grocers' guild (*bakal başî*) as well as some merchants with elaborate seals.

The declaration of the people of Niš conveys the impression of urban governance as a collaboration among local elites from the two principal communities for the common good of the city. The letter of Governor Zeynelabidin Pasha, who forwarded the people's report to Istanbul, adds another dimension to this.⁴²⁸ According to the governor, the cleaning of the moats had been a longer-standing issue, which the authorities, for lack of funds, wanted to impose on the local inhabitants. The latter, however, were reluctant and only could be convinced by the negative consequences of the recent flooding. So, on a day at the end of July, the whole city together with the local garrison assembled at the moat and started the collective cleaning action after they had offered thanks and prayers to the sultan.

With this version of events, Zeynelabidin Pasha successfully presents himself to the central government as the principal broker in this episode. Whether true or not, this earned him approbation in the decree (*irade*) that was issued by the Porte and mentioned, besides the efforts of the people, also the governor's initiative in persuading them.⁴²⁹

The two principal urban communities of Niš, the Christians and Muslims, successfully cooperated in the upkeep of such infrastructures that concerned the whole city such as the fortress (security) or the moat (health, flood prevention). On other issues that only concerned one of these communities, they had to negotiate directly with the authorities. The first such example we will discuss is the founding of a new type of state school, a *rüşdiye*; then we will address the efforts of the Christians to build a new church.

In summer 1856 a collective petition by the Muslim inhabitants of Niš signed by the notables, the sheikhs of the local Sufi orders, the representative of the descendants of the Prophet (*nakibüleşraf*), a group of landowners, the imams and *muhtars* of the various quarters as well as a number of merchants and elders started

428 İ.DH.. 441/29101, doc. 2, gurre-i Muharrem 1276 (31 July 1859).

429 İ.DH.. 441/29101, doc. 3, 22 Muharrem 1276 (21 August 1859).

the initiative for a new school in Niš. The petitioners asked for one of the new type of secondary state schools called *rüşdiye* to be founded in their city.⁴³⁰

When public education came to the agenda of the government in the 1840s, these secondary schools were conceived to follow the basic Quranic schools that usually were attached to the mosques. The reformers envisioned them to spread loyalty to the state by means of pedagogy and to widen the pool from which they could draw employees for the administration. Initially, with a curriculum of two and later of four years of Arabic, Persian, arithmetic and geography, a handful of these schools were founded in Istanbul in the second half of the 1840s. Although *rüşdiye* schools, at least since 1856, were open to all of the communities of the empire, it is telling that the petitioners perceived them as a Muslim affair. In fact, the education they provided remained highly oriented towards religious topics and the inculcation of Islamic values.⁴³¹

The cover letter to the petition issued by the council of Niš added more details regarding this school project and shows that the initiative was obviously coordinated between local elites and the provincial administration, including Governor Mehmed Vasıf Pasha. The council proposed a building near the governor's *konak* in the fortress as a possible place for the new school and named three local *ulema* who could act as teachers for Arabic, Persian and calligraphy.⁴³² In its assessment of the petition the Council of Education (Meclis-i Maârif) in Istanbul approved of Niš in principle as a location for one of the 25 new schools the government had announced plans to build.⁴³³ It was referring to a decree issued in 1853 that proposed to found more *rüşdiyes* in Rumelia in addition to the already-existing ones in Bursa, Edirne and a handful of towns in Bosnia. By 1856 only six of these projected schools had been concluded, so the initiative from Niš, which had not been in the original line-up, must have been highly welcome.⁴³⁴

However, the petition was not fully granted but had to be modified according to the 'requirements of economy and order'. The Council of Education argued that to ensure common standards, the teaching staff would have to be appointed from among the graduates of the teachers' college (Darülmualimin), which had

430 İ.DH.. 356/23504, doc. 1, 13 Şevval 1272 (17 June 1856).

431 Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 37–44, 60–61.

432 İ.DH.. 356/23504, doc. 2, 20 Şevval 1272 (24 June 1856).

433 İ.DH.. 356/23504, doc. 3, 21 Cemazeyilevvel 1272 (24 June 1856?). Probably this was the Council of Education (Meclis-i maârif-i umûmiye) that had been founded in 1846 from within the High Council and which later became part of the Ministry of Education when the latter was founded in 1857. See Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education*, 38–44.

434 Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education*, 68–69.

been operating since 1848 in Istanbul. So, a head teacher (*muallim-i evvel*) was appointed from Istanbul and instead of two additional teachers, the city was allowed to appoint the most qualified of the proposed candidates as an adjunct teacher (*muallim-i sani*).⁴³⁵

In a letter from November 1857 the council of Niš reported to the government that the school building had been renovated and furnished and that the mufti had solemnly opened the school in the presence of the local *ulema* and notables as well as the two new teachers and their students.⁴³⁶ The *rüşdiye* operated until the end of the Ottoman period; its most prominent graduate was the Ottoman intellectual, journalist and novelist Ahmed Midhat Efendi (1844–1912), who stayed in Niš in the first half of the 1860s under the care of his brother, an official in the service of Governor Midhat Pasha.

The founding of the *rüşdiye* in Niš offers another example for the way Tanzimat policies were implemented on a provincial level. It was not so much an imposition from above, but rather the local initiative was necessary to kick-start the process. However, the centre monitored closely that the resources it provided would be spent in the prescribed way. That the whole affair unfolded so smoothly seems to indicate that there was a high degree of agreement about the goal of the reforms. This was not always the case, as the next example, the initiative for a new church, will show. That it took more than twenty years to build and consecrate this church is indicative of the fact that it touched on fundamental issues in the Ottoman political structure, in this case the equal status of the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. Moreover, in contrast to the previous examples, the church project not only involved local and imperial actors, but international relations also had a decisive impact on it.

In 1850 the Christians of Niš together with their bishop Joanikije (Yovanikiyos) attempted to gain permission to build a new church in the city. As usual, the initiative started with a petition by the Christian community of the city, which unfortunately is extant only in the summary Governor Mehmed Vasif Pasha passed on to the grand vizirate. According to this summary, the petitioners argued in a straightforward manner that their old church was not big enough for the Christian population of the city anymore. The mass of worshippers led to cramming and people having to wait outside the church. Therefore, a new church had to be built either on the spot of the old one or in another suitable place in the city. The petition proposed a ground plan for such a new building with the

435 İ.DH.. 356/23504, doc. 5, 1 Safer 1273 (1 Oktober 1856).

436 MVL 317/81, 23 Rabiulevvel 1274 (11 November 1857).

dimensions of 45 x 30 *zira* and 15 *zira* in height (ca. 34 x 23 metres and 11 metres in height).⁴³⁷

It took six years before this petition was granted because of the international dimension Ottoman church politics had acquired since the 1840s. Britain was eager to restrict the influence of the Orthodox Church because the Patriarch had insisted on his authority over Orthodox British subjects on the Ionian Islands, British since 1815. In contrast, Russia, claiming the role of the protector of all Orthodox Christians, defended the Patriarchy's rights. In this atmosphere, tensions in the international system crystallised around the minor religious dispute between Orthodox and Catholic monks in Jerusalem, leading to the Crimean War (1853–56) between Russia and a coalition of the Ottoman Empire, France and Britain. After the war, the Ottoman government reordered the status of its non-Muslim subjects and their confessional organisations according to the wishes of its allies and its own reform agenda. The respective decree of 1856, the Reform Decree (*Islahat Fermanı*), reformulated the non-Muslims' position in the language of rights, e.g. in the case of the Christians, it took up the current practice to grant the repair of churches in villages and towns where only Christians lived and extended it to mixed cities in cases in which the communities inhabited distinct quarters. Building a new church still required the permission of the Ottoman government, but the community now was entitled to a speedy decision.⁴³⁸ Moreover, the decree gave lay members more weight in the different church organisations in comparison to the traditional clergy and strengthened the ability of the Ottoman state to directly interfere with these organisations.⁴³⁹

The publication of the Reform Decree in 1856 also had a positive impact on the project to build a new church in Niš: the foundation stone of the Cathedral (Saborna Crkva) was laid in the same year. Its architect was the well-known Macedonian master builder Andreja Damjanov, who was the head of a workshop of itinerant builders in the *pečalbarstvo* tradition from the Debar (Debre) region in western Macedonia. From the 1830s to the 1870s, Damjanov built over 40 churches in Macedonia (e.g. in Skopje, Kratovo, Veleš), on the territory of today's

437 A.}MKT.UM.. 99/8, 11 Rabiulahir 1266 (24 February 1850).

438 See article six of the *ferman* in George Young, *Corps de droit ottoman* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905–1906), 2:5.

439 Jack Fairey, 'Russia's Quest for the Holy Grail: Relics, Liturgics, and Great-Power Politics in the Ottoman Empire', in *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*, ed. Lucien J. Frary and Mara Kozelsky (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 131–164; Kemal H. Karpat, 'Ottoman Views and Policies Towards the Orthodox Christian Church', in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History*, ed. ibid. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 605–609.

Serbia (Pirot, Niš, Smederevo) and in Bosnia (Sarajevo, Mostar).⁴⁴⁰ However, the construction of the cathedral in Niš was seriously delayed and was not fully completed until 1872. Again, there were repercussions of a church-political question, this time from within the Ottoman Orthodox community.

The reorganisation of Christian churches and communal organisations in 1856 had also encouraged a group of clerics and lay members of the Orthodox Church to demand a Bulgarian church organisation independent from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. They were part of the Bulgarian cultural revival (*vuzrazhdane*) that, starting from the late eighteenth century, was defining a modern Bulgarian culture and language. Regarding the church question, it was their aim to promote local bishops who were not part of the Greek-speaking Orthodox hierarchy and to obtain control over cultural and educational matters in the Bulgarian language. The result was a serious split in many Orthodox congregations in Ottoman Europe and an ongoing struggle between two parties. Not all of those who would self-identify as Bulgarian-speakers – which could in fact be all Slavic-speakers of Ottoman Europe, with the exception the Serbian-speakers – supported the separatists; there could be multiple reasons to prefer the old order.⁴⁴¹

In Niš, the advance of the church building was probably delayed because this split disrupted the finances of the local church institution. In 1860 or 1861 the anti-Patriarchate or ‘Bulgarian’ party in Niš managed to exile Bishop Kalinikos and blocked any attempt by the Ottoman administration to reach a compromise between the two sides. While in this case Governor Midhat Pasha tried to stay above the conflict, in other locations, as the governor of the Danube Province, he supported the anti-Patriarchate party where they represented the majority. He saw this as an opportunity to offer the people an alternative to Bulgarian nationalism. At this early stage, for the governor, there was still a difference between the church movement and the national movement, which later became largely congruent.⁴⁴²

Finally, in 1870, after confrontations on the local level and negotiations that also involved the European Powers, an independent Bulgarian church organisation, the Bulgarian Exarchate, was recognised by the Ottoman authorities. This was part of the ongoing modernisation of the Ottoman non-Muslims’ institutions of self-government, commonly known as *millets*, that administered the religious, educational and legal autonomy the Jews and Christians enjoyed in the Ottoman

440 Jasmina Hadžieva-Aleksievska and Elizabeta Kasapova, *Arhitekt Andreja Damjanov 1813–1878* (Skopje, 2001).

441 R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 65–75.

442 Milen Petrov, ‘Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Paşa and the Vilayet of Danube, 1864–1868’ (PhD dissertation, Princeton, 2006), 338–346.

context. From the beginning of the nineteenth century and especially in the reform period, the Ottoman government organised the *millets* into an empire-wide hierarchical system and also created new *millets*, e.g. for the Armenian Catholics or the Protestants of the empire. However, the Bulgarian Exarchate was fundamentally different from other millet organisations because it deviated from the principle of non-territoriality that had been one of the basic features of the old system and is still recognised for its originality today.⁴⁴³ Because in the 1870 solution the Exarchate was to remain formally part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, most the Orthodox dioceses of Ottoman Europe were distributed between the two parties. For example, Niš and Pirot were assigned to the Exarchate together with all the dioceses north of the Balkan mountains and parts of those in Thrace and Macedonia. A few dioceses were split, and in rare cases, cities were assigned to the Patriarchate with the surrounding countryside belonging to the Exarchate. There was even a provision that a diocese could join the Exarchate with a vote by two third of its members. However, the Patriarchy did not accept this solution unilaterally ordained by the sultan and declared the Exarchate schismatic and guilty of the sin of phyletism (tribalism).⁴⁴⁴ As a consequence, in some places, although they officially ‘belonged’ to the Exarchate, the struggle between the two parties continued and the Patriarchy still nominated bishops who tried to influence local public opinion in their favour. However, on the whole, the territorialisation of the Exarchate in the name of an ethnic or national group was successful. As we will see in the next chapter (7.1), this had some unintended and dangerous political consequences for the Ottomans.

To return to the urban level, the official recognition of the Exarchate opened the way for the completion of Niš Cathedral, which was consecrated in 1872 as the principal church in the diocese of Niš as part of the Bulgarian Exarchate. In its local urban context, the cathedral added to an already-existing cluster of Orthodox institutions at the southern edge of the city (see fig. 6.3). It heightened the visibility of the city’s Orthodox community because it dominated the skyline that before had been marked by the fortress as well as the minarets of the mosques. Thus, it can be seen as an anchor of the Orthodox regligioscape at a very local level, but also in the larger context of Ottoman Europe, where similar church projects proliferated during the Tanzimat era. These churches had to carefully navigate between two poles: on the one hand, the promise of equality between the religious communities that the Ottoman state had given out in the 1830s and

443 Karen Barkey and George Gavriliis, ‘The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and Its Contemporary Legacy’, *Ethnopolitics* 15, no. 1 (2016): 24–42.

444 Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 74.

renewed in 1856; and on the other hand, the traditional hierarchical relationship, in which the Christian community was in a subordinate position to Islam.

The cathedral in Niš was a sign of the new opportunities for the Christian community regarding its visibility, massiveness and height, which all exceeded what had been possible when the last new church, Ss. Archangels, was constructed at the beginning of the century. However, the cathedral did not challenge centrality as perhaps the most important indicator of the religious hierarchy. The new church had to be situated in the prefigured territorial structure of the city, i.e. it had to be placed at the city's periphery, which was at the same time the heart of the *varoş*. This may be the reason why the church was not controversial in interreligious, but only in intrareligious relations, i.e. regarding the formation of the Bulgarian Exarchate. The history of the cathedral's construction demonstrates that it was truly an Ottoman church, reflecting the changing confessional boundaries in the empire. In contrast, in other cities, new churches were highly contested and opposed by the Muslim inhabitants as e.g. in Sarajevo, where in 1872, the new Orthodox church had to be inaugurated under the protection of Ottoman troops.⁴⁴⁵

The four examples of urban development projects presented above offer a close look into Ottoman urban governance in the 1850s. They reveal that the process of reform and political centralisation was to a large degree a project of rearranging political communication and institutions and not so much one of committing new resources to the modernisation of urban life. In essence, urban governance in this period remained a collaboration of various local actors who were in negotiations among each other and with local representatives of the central government such as the governors. Most importantly, urban development and the provision of public services such as security, health and education to a large degree remained dependent on local initiative and contributions in the form of labour or money. This was despite the fact that the Tanzimat state increasingly claimed responsibility for such public services as well as the material and institutional infrastructures to provide them.

Principal actors in this system of urban governance were local elites who were entwined with the central state in many ways. One of the new instruments by which the Tanzimat state tried to bind them to the centre were the councils. Given the general problems of the Ottoman central state with gathering sound

⁴⁴⁵ Robert M. Hayden and Timothy D. Walker, 'Intersecting Religioscapes: A Comparative Approach to Trajectories of Change, Scale, and Competitive Sharing of Religious Spaces', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 81, no. 2 (2013): 399–426. For a more focused treatment of nineteenth-century church building in Niš see Florian Riedler, 'Communal Boundaries and Confessional Policies in Ottoman Niš', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, no. 4 (2018): 726–756.

information, collecting taxes and recruiting qualified personnel, integrating local elites in this way was absolutely necessary to rule the provinces. However, this system in many cases slipped from the control of the centre, especially when local forces colluded with governors. Together they could manipulate it in their favour, sometimes creating mafia-like structures to the detriment of the Ottoman subjects. The centre was aware of this and attempted to minimise the power of the governors at the beginning of the reform period. However, after a re-organisation of provincial administration in 1852, the governors got much of their responsibilities and powers back and again became the backbone of provincial administration in order to ensure a more streamlined and better administration.⁴⁴⁶

In this situation, the centre used inspection tours as the instrument of choice for checking on the performance of the provincial institutions and officials. As was the case e.g. after the 1841 peasant uprising in Niš, inspectors (sing. *müfettiş*) were regularly sent to deal with acute problems in the provinces in later decades also. Their reports together with censuses, tax surveys and other official documents created a body of knowledge about the provinces in the central bureaus of administration in Istanbul. Such fact-finding missions cum internal disciplinary campaigns were a typical instrument in modernising states all over Europe.⁴⁴⁷

At the end of the 1850s, the grievances about Ottoman governance were accumulating, especially in the Balkans. To follow up on litigations and protests from within and also as a reaction to diplomatic interventions by the European Powers, in spring 1860 Grand Vizier Kırıslı Mehmed Pasha personally conducted an extended inspection tour. It led him from Varna across the Balkan peninsula to Salonica, including many stops in northern Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia. The grand vizier also stayed in Niš, the centre of a province (*eyalet*) that also comprised Sofia, to investigate charges against its governor Zeynelabidin Pasha. The investigation found that the governor was notoriously corrupt, accepting bribes for manipulating the administrative and judicial process, e.g. from the bishop of Pirot to ensure that charges against a priest would be dropped or from Christian

446 Önen and Reyhan, *Mülkten Ülkeye*, 137–149; Abdulhamit Kirmizi, ‘Taming the Governors: The Swinging Pendulum of Power over the Ottoman Provinces in the Nineteenth Century’, *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies* 6, no. 1 (2010): 4–23.

447 Jens Hanssen, ‘Practices of Integration: Center-Periphery Relations in the Ottoman Empire’, in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2002), 49–74; Alp Yücel Kaya, ‘Searching for Economic and Administrative Reforms: The Enquiry of 1863 in the Ottoman Empire’, in *The Golden Age of State Enquiries: Rural Enquiries in the Nineteenth Century; from Fact Gathering to Political Instrument*, ed. Nadine Vivier (Turnout: Brepols, 2014), 75–89.

notables who had unlawfully appropriated communal property. The governor's obstruction in the attempt to re-order property relation and his personal intervention in favour of *çiflik* owners were also uncovered. Consequently, Zeynelabidin was removed from office and sentenced together with several other officials and members of the provincial council of Niš, among them Kranyalı Đorđe as a Christian representative, to long prison terms.⁴⁴⁸

The grand vizier issued detailed instructions (*talimat*) for the new governor of Niš on how to govern the province in future. They addressed many of the problems that were known since the beginning of the reform period such as the illegal *çiflik* duties as well as other unlawful taxes and fees levied by the authorities and by the *çorbacı*s, the representatives of the local Christian communities. Another issue addressed in the instructions was the comportment of the police vis-à-vis the Christian peasants and the related problem of banditry. Almost all problems of governance concerned the inhabitants of the countryside, whose side the government took vis-à-vis the traditional elites of landowners and local officials; the governor was urged to take an interest in the countryside and change traditional ways of governance according to the spirit of reform.⁴⁴⁹

Kıbrıslı Mehmed Pasha's inspection tour ushered in a decade of great changes in the provincial administration of the empire. The following section will demonstrate the pioneering role of Niš and its governor Midhat Pasha in this process. It will argue that a new approach to infrastructural governance further accelerated the modernisation of urban space that had already started in the previous decades and finally tackled the problems of the central Balkan route, which had not been working properly since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Moreover, infrastructural governance and especially the construction of new roads beyond the central route also had their bearing on Ottoman territoriality on a regional and local level and, arguably, on the post-Ottoman borders, which are the focus of the next chapter.

448 Yonca Köksal and Davut Erkan, *Sadrazam Kıbrıslı Mehmet Emin Paşa'nın Rumeli Teftişi* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2007), 1: 19–27; 2: 246–257, 442–455, 528.

449 'Niş vâlisi devletlü Osman Paşa hazretlerine verilen ta'limât-ı seniyye', in *ibid.*, 2:183–191.

6.3 Modernisation of Infrastructure

In the beginning of 1861, the appointment of a new governor established the province of Niš as the centre of the ongoing process of reforming Ottoman provincial administration. The new governor was Ahmed Şefik Midhat Pasha (1822–84), a career official who previously had worked for the Supreme Council in the capital in several functions. As an inspector, he had become acquainted with local conditions and political practice in the provinces when he was sent to Vidin and Silistra to examine financial irregularities. Niš was Midhat's first appointment as a governor, which proved so successful that it earned him the reputation as a trouble shooter in difficult localities. Therefore, the Ottoman government used this experience and involved Midhat in drafting the 1864 code of provincial administration. From 1864 to 1868 he acted as governor of the first province regulated by this code, the newly created Danube Province (Tuna Vilayeti), which also comprised the former province of Niš; later he was sent to Baghdad (1869–72) and to Syria (1878–80) to implement the new administrative order. During these appointments Midhat tried to increase security, develop the local economy and infrastructure and secure the loyalty of the local subjects through a host of ad-hoc measures as well as long-term institutional arrangements. After Baghdad, he returned to Istanbul where he became grand vizier twice and acted as one of the principal sponsors of the Ottoman constitution of 1876. The last phase of Midhat's life was characterised by conflict with Sultan Abdülhamid, who had him exiled to Taif in the Hejaz where he was murdered on the sultan's order in 1884.⁴⁵⁰

As governor of Niš, where he arrived in March 1861, Midhat engaged with the problems in the province as they had been identified in the previous year on the grand vizier's inspection tour. The focus of Midhat's policies and their most innovative measures concerned infrastructural governance, which resulted in construction activity on a new scale. Famously, Midhat build many new roads and bridges all over the province of Niš, but the city itself was also embellished with some new buildings. It can be said that Midhat was the first representative of a new type of Ottoman governor for whom infrastructure development was the focus of their policies and a new source of legitimation.⁴⁵¹

450 For biographical information, see Roderic H. Davison, 'Midhat Paşa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition, online; Gökhan Çetinsaya and Ş. Tufan Buzpınar, 'Midhat Paşa', in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* 30, 7–11.

451 Florian Riedler, 'Ottoman "Infrastructure Governors" as Agents of Technological and Economic Modernization', in *Transforming Southeast Europe during the Long 19th Century: Persons and Personalities as Agents of Modernization in the Ottoman and the Post-Ottoman Space*, ed. Boriana Antonova-Goleva and Ivelina Masheva, 323–352 (Leiden: Brill, 2024).

One of Midhat's first projects, building a new prison in Niš, demonstrates the strong continuity with the previous era of urban modernisation. I will first portray this and similar projects of rebuilding administrative and security infrastructure in the city before reviewing his modernisation of transport infrastructure in the sub-province of Niš and beyond.

In a letter to the Supreme Council written in April 1861,⁴⁵² Midhat underlined how urgently the city needed a new prison because the old building rather 'killed than confined its inmates'. The new governor revived a project of one of his predecessors and modified it in such way that it could be realised immediately. Most importantly, the project was downsized so that it would be considerably cheaper than before. Additionally, Midhat proposed to add to the budget the fines of the officials, among them the previous governor Zeynelabidin, who had been sentenced by the grand vizier on his recent inspection tour. The new prison, of which Midhat also provided a drawing, would be modelled after the one that he had recently visited in Salonica. As an additional advantage, Midhat reported that there was already an empty plot available in the immediate vicinity of the governor's *konak* in the fortress. It was occupied only by a ruined house, which was owned by the state, meaning that no other buildings had to be purchased. The central government in Istanbul approved of this plan, and the new prison was ready for use already in 1862.⁴⁵³

In a similar manner, Midhat addressed another project of security infrastructure, a new complex of barracks. The garrison of Niš was too big to be housed entirely in the barracks that traditionally were located inside the fortress, so that many soldiers had to live in the city in khans and similar accommodations. Earlier initiatives to modernise and enlarge the existing barracks had not been successful due to the high costs involved. Even a donation of 350,000 *kuruş* by the people, in return for which two new *rüşdiye* schools as well as a Christian elementary school were added to the project of building new barracks, were not enough to realise it.

As previously, Midhat reworked the project with the help of an engineer from the Ottoman army stationed in Niš, the same who had already designed the new prison. One important step was to recalculate the costs, which the governor could bring down by adding to the budget the already mentioned fines. In addition, Midhat was promised a loan from Mihalaki Gümüşgerdan, a rich textile producer and owner of one of the first textile mills in Plovdiv. In November 1861, the governor submitted the revised project to the central government, it was approved, and

452 İ.DH.. 472/031607, doc. 3, 11 Şevval 1277 (22 April 1861).

453 Nejat Göyünç, "Midhat Paşa'nın Niş Valiliği Hakkında Notlar Ve Belgeler," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12 (1982): 286.

the new barracks were opened in a ceremony in September 1862. The complex of dormitories, officers' quarters, stables and storehouses was located outside the Leskofça Gate on the left bank. The old barracks inside the fortress were renovated and used as a hospital.⁴⁵⁴

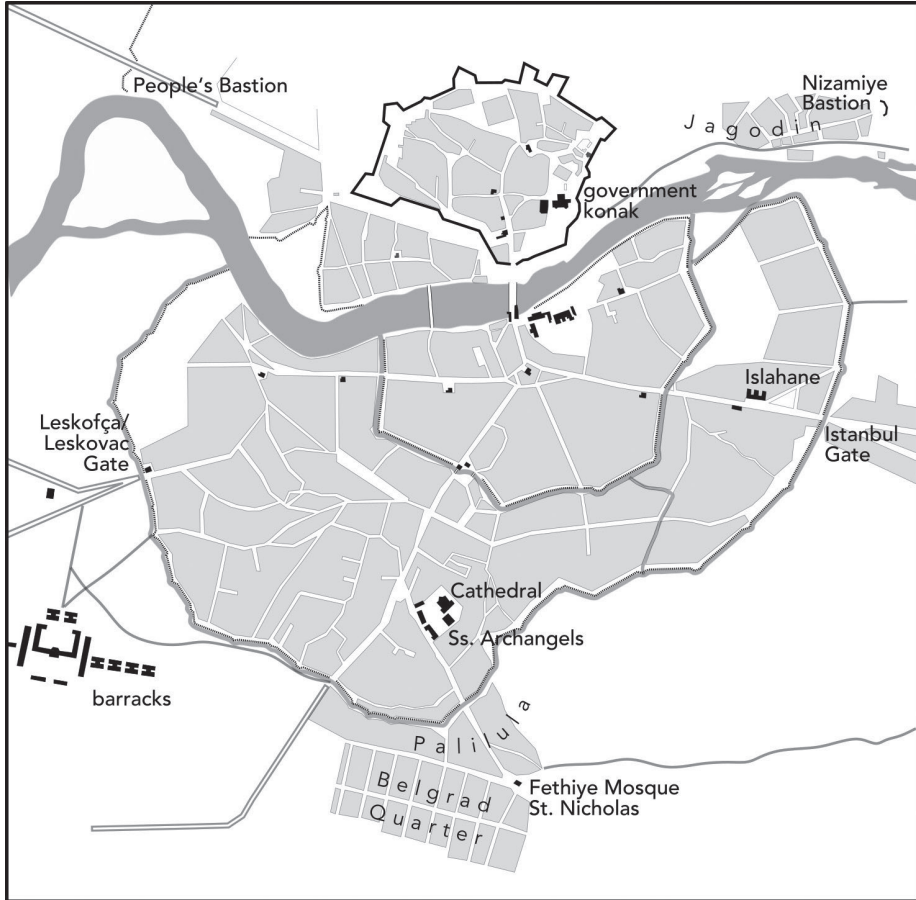


Fig. 6.3: Niš in the 1860s and 1870s. Adapted from Feliks Dalković's plan of Niš, 1:4000, March 1878 (OeStA, KA KPS KS G I b, 169-3). Cartography by Florian Riedler.

The most famous of Midhat's development projects as governor of Niš was the founding of an orphanage cum vocational school called a reformatory (*ıslahhane*). In winter 1863, he started to discuss the establishment of such an institution

454 Göyünc, 'Midhat Paşa'nın Niş Valiliği', 284–286.

with the central government in Istanbul and about half a year later his plans were approved.⁴⁵⁵ The reformatory was financed by donations and by revenue from municipal property such as mills, khans and tanneries. In addition, the income from certain administrative fees were earmarked for its upkeep. In 1865 it was home for roughly 100 Muslim and Christian orphans as well as boys from destitute families between seven and fourteen years of age. They were taught reading and writing in Turkish and 'Bulgarian' and received professional training as tailors or shoemakers. The workshop of the reformatory produced uniforms and boots for the local garrison.⁴⁵⁶

After other reformatories had been built in the Danube Province, e.g. in Ruse and Sofia, in 1867 the central government decided to establish such institutions in the rest of the empire also. In 1874 25 reformatories operated in all regions. In many ways, they reflected the Tanzimat ideology as it was already present in the model institution in Niš. In the first instance, reformatories were charitable institutions geared at the poor and particularly at refugee communities who were not able to take care of their children. But the reformatories also had a strong security task, i.e. controlling 'dangerous children' who were engaged in unwanted behaviour such as begging and who were suspected of developing criminal habits. Moreover, the novel approach to charity also had a strong economic function. The early reformatories in the Danube Province as well as those founded later were vital centres of production and professional education. Lastly, they were showcases of Ottomanism, i.e. the equality of Muslims and Non-Muslims, who were to be educated together to become patriotic citizens. In many places, the reformatories had a considerable imprint on urban space, symbolising a new order in their program and their buildings, which were among the most modern in many provincial Ottoman cities.⁴⁵⁷

In Niš, this last aspect was immediately visible. The reformatory was housed in a new two-story building in the east of the city near the Istanbul Gate. On the city plan of 1878, it stands out for its impressive dimensions (fig. 6.3). Used as a hospital after 1878, it survived until 1890, before it was torn down and a new building for the gymnasium was erected in its place, today named after the famous Serbian author Stevan Sremac, who was one of its teachers.⁴⁵⁸

455 İ.DH.. 525/36231, 22 Zilhicce 1280 (29 May 1864); İ.MVL. 502/22735, 21 Ramazan 1280 (29 February 1864).

456 *Tuna*, no. 13, 13 Muharrem 1282 (8 June 1865).

457 Nazan Maksudyan, *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 78–112.

458 See https://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ислахана_у_Нишу#cite_ref-5.

From an urbanistic point of view, another of Midhat's initiatives was also most significant. Similar to the prison, the barracks and the reformatory, the planning of new city quarters in Niš shows how the Tanzimat state applied new standards to urban space not only in the capital, but also in the provinces. The project started as an attempt to regularise the natural urban growth of Niš. In summer 1862 the provincial council asked the central government in an official report⁴⁵⁹ to sanction the creation of three new city quarters. Two of these quarters had already been settled by Christians, who had built houses and shops on former fields and gardens to the south of the city outside the outer ring of palisades. Although the report clearly marks this as an illegal and unregulated practice, it also acknowledges the need for new houses and therefore proposes to legalise these settlements. As an additional benefit, this would add new tax revenue to the budget of the city.

The two new quarters that were created were an extension of the Christian *varoş* growing into the area outside the second ring of palisades. The area was called Palilula; it had already been recorded in the Survey of Wealth of 1845 as a *çiftlik* with a Christian population of 38 households of craftsmen, tavern keepers, agricultural workers and transporters.⁴⁶⁰ It is reasonable to assume that in the fifteen years that had passed, the population had risen considerably. Unfortunately, the 1862 council report gives no further information about the size and population structure of the two new quarters that were to be formed in this area.

In contrast to this example of natural urban growth, in the case of the third quarter that was to be formed nearby, the Ottoman administration took the initiative. This third quarter was planned on an empty plot surrounding an abandoned mosque and was to be settled by Muslims. In the report of the provincial council, the mosque in question was named Yeğen Mehmed Paşa Mosque, which is identical with Fethiye Mosque, the mosque Grand Vizier Yeğen Mehmed Pasha had founded in 1738 by converting the church of St. Nicholas. Apparently, the mosque had never formed the nucleus of a regular quarter and at some stage had fallen into ruins.⁴⁶¹

The Muslim quarter became an example for how urban planning connected to the political dynamics of this period. In June 1862, at the time the report from Niš about the three new quarters was written, violent unrest with many deaths shook Belgrade. Christian and Muslim inhabitants as well as police of both sides clashed, and the Ottoman garrison of Belgrade's fortress bombarded the

459 İ.MVL. 470/21289, doc. 1, 23 Zilhicce 1278 (21 June 1862).

460 ML.VRD.TMT.d... 11117.

461 On the financial basis of Fethiye and litigations surrounding it, see Radmila Tričković, 'Urban Razvitak Niša u XVIII Veku', in *Istorija Niša*, vol. 1, ed. Danica Milić (Niš: Gradina i Prosveta, 1983), 260.

city. Since 1817, the date of the de-facto Serbian autonomy, the parts of Belgrade outside the moat were under Serbian administration and the fortress was held by the Ottoman military, while the city inside the moat was populated by a mixed Christian and Muslim population.⁴⁶²

Because of the clashes, ca. 1,800 Muslim inhabitants of Belgrade fled to Ottoman territory in the south; the majority of them came to Niš and were put up in khans, mosques and also in private accommodations. First aid was covered by private donations, and later the local treasury provided funds for the permanent support of the refugees. Among these funds was the profit from the sale of Hafızpaşazade Ali Bey's *çiftliks* that had fallen to the state after his death two years earlier. In this situation, Midhat proposed to settle the refugees from Belgrade in the planned Muslim quarter at Fethiye Mosque. Those refugees who had lost everything would receive free housing, while costs would be recovered from those refugees who received a government salary or still had property in Belgrade.⁴⁶³ On this initiative, within one year the authorities in a first step built 144 and in a second step 60 refugee homes.⁴⁶⁴

In many ways, the refugee quarter represented the urbanistic ideals of the Tanzimat. As we can see on the city map of 1878 (fig. 6.3), it had an orthogonal street grid, and the state-built houses were probably standardised to a certain extent. These were aesthetic standards that were developed and implemented first in Istanbul and then also in other cities of the empire when quarters were rebuilt e.g. after a fire or when cities were expanded.⁴⁶⁵ As the example of the Muslim quarter shows, Midhat wanted to implement this model of urban planning also in Niš, a city still characterised by natural urban growth. But only the arrival of the refugees, which justified the massive investment by the state, offered the chance to make the plan a reality. The new approach to urban development was implemented more systematically when the Danube Province was founded. As the

462 E. Attila Aytekin, 'The Production of Space during the Period of Autonomy: Notes on Belgrade Urban Space, 1817–67', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 6 (2016): 588–607.

463 İ..DH.. 499/33937, doc. 2, 17 Cemazeyilevvel 1279 (10 November 1862). There is a trans-literation of the document in Göyünç, 'Midhat Paşa'nın Niş Valiliği', 287–288.

464 İ..MVL. 502/22694, 1 Ramazan 1280 (9 February 1864); İ..MVL. 559/25112, 18 Rabiulahir 1283 (30 August 1866).

465 Stéphane Yerasimos, 'A propos des réformes urbaines des Tanzimat', in *Villes ottomanes à la fin de l'empire*, ed. Paul Dumont and François Georgeon (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1992): 17–32; Alexandra Yerolympos, 'Formes spatiales d'expansion urbaine et le rôle des communautés non musulmanes à l'époque des Réformes: Études de cas dans les villes des provinces européennes de l'Empire ottoman (1839–1912)', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 107–110 (2005), 113–142.

capital of the new province, Ruse was embellished with new government buildings and a new quarter at the harbour.⁴⁶⁶ Additionally, urban governance was institutionalised: first in Ruse and within a couple of years, municipalities were also founded in most of the other towns of the province. It was their task to provide urban infrastructure and services such as the paving and cleaning of streets, water supply, waste management etc.⁴⁶⁷

It is not clear when exactly Niš municipality was founded and, because official documents such as minutes or reports have not survived, it is impossible to reconstruct its work. Only occasionally the *Tuna*, the newspaper of the Danube Province, reports on the municipality's achievements, e.g. in 1867 when 84 streetlamps, 14 of them using gas, were installed in Niš.⁴⁶⁸

With the yearbooks of the Danube Province and those of Prizren Province, of which Niš became part in 1869, we have a source on the changing composition of the municipal council. In 1285 AH (1868/69) Niš municipal council consisted of its president Kahraman Ağa and seven members, Abdurrahman Bey, Ali Bey, Vasko Efendi, Ğaçe Efendi, Zahavaki Efendi, Ibrahim Efendi and the warden of the treasury, Hüseyin Bey. We have no further information on these individuals, but from their names we can see that there were at least three non-Muslims among them. This composition stayed the same in 1286 and only changed slightly by 1290 AH (1873/74). In the following year Abdurrahman had become president for Kahraman, who was no longer on the council.⁴⁶⁹

As the examples presented above show, Midhat's building activities and the new infrastructure and services he implemented on an urban level to a large degree continued the policies of the preceding period. In contrast, his activities were much more innovative on another field, i.e. the modernisation of roads that linked Niš with the surrounding countryside and to other parts of the province and beyond. According to Ali Haydar, Midhat's son and biographer, Midhat learned about the lack of modern roads as one of the basic problems of the provincial economy in an assembly composed of the local Muslim and Christian notables:

466 Felix Kanitz, *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan: Historisch-geographisch-ethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren 1860–1879* (Leipzig: Fries, 1879), 1:123–124, 1:126–127.

467 Petrov, 'Tanzimat for the Countryside', 142–147; Tetsuya Sahara, 'The Ottoman City Council and the Beginning of the Modernisation of Urban Space in the Balkans', in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag et al. (London: Routledge, 2011).

468 Sahara, 'Ottoman City Council', 39.

469 *Salname-i Vilayet-i Tuna* 1285, p. 67; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Tuna* 1286, p. 74; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Prizren* 1290, p. 83; *Salname-i Vilayet-i Prizren* 1291, p. 97.

Nowhere in the country are there macadamised roads [*şose yolu*] and people experience difficulties to transport their crops; and the problem of banditry and highway robbery, which have been on the rise for several years, led to a stagnation of all transactions, so that everyone is left impoverished and the people's taxes could not be collected for a couple of years.⁴⁷⁰

As a reaction, the governor started the construction of a macadamised road viable for carts and coaches on the main route towards Sofia. But it could only be partly finished by winter 1862/3, as Midhat had to admit in a report to the Supreme Council in Istanbul.⁴⁷¹ Especially the mountain passes south of Niş as well as the one near the village of Dragoman on the way to Sofia proved extremely difficult to regulate. In the same report and on a more optimistic note, Midhat prided himself on having totally re-organised and considerably accelerated the construction process of the new roads. As he stated to his superiors, he had adopted a road-building technique from Serbia that concentrated works on the surface and no longer on the foundation of the roads. Additionally, he had given the peasants living in the villages along the route who were obliged by law to build the new roads more freedom in organising and scheduling their workload.

In this as well as in later reports and newspaper articles in the emerging provincial press, roads were constantly advertised as infrastructure for the people. For example, the official gazette of the Danube Province ran many stories about the enthusiasm of peasants working on roads, which they considered the guarantee of their own prosperity.⁴⁷² For the authorities, it was important to mask the forced character of these labour contributions because they wanted to prove that in fact, these roads were modern infrastructure, i.e. that they were able to have a deeper effect on society than roads had had in the past. This was part of the understanding of economic development and progress that Tanzimat bureaucrats had started to adopt since the 1830s. In this understanding, infrastructures of transport and communication were given central importance.⁴⁷³

470 Ali Haydar Midhat, *Hatıralar*, 1:31.

471 İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ, no. 21874, 14 Receb 1279 (5 January 1863) (İ..MVL. 482/21874 according to the new numbering) as transliterated in Nejat Göyünç, 'Midhat Paşa'nın Niş Valiliği Hakkında Notlar ve Belgeler', *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12 (1982): 309–316.

472 Petrov, 'Tanzimat for the Countryside', 136–138.

473 Sadık Rıfat Paşa, 'Avrupa Ahvâline Dair Risâle', *Marife* 6, no. 3 (2006): 467; Florian Riedler, 'Building Modern Infrastructures on Ancient Routes: Road and Rail Development in Nineteenth-Century Edirne', in *The Heritage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times: Continuities, Disruptions and Reconnections.*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Florian Riedler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 438–441.

Such a modern understanding of road infrastructure was also expressed by the shape of the network itself. It is not surprising that Midhat's construction programme started with the traditional axis of traffic, the Istanbul–Belgrade highway, on which Niš had been a central stop since Antiquity. As one of the most important routes of Ottoman Europe, it had already been in the focus of modernisation efforts in the 1840s. However, even on an important section such as the one between Istanbul and Edirne, the project of turning a traditional road into a modern macadamised highway was only partly successful.⁴⁷⁴ By continuing road modernisation from the northern end of this Trans-Balkan route, Midhat tried to bring this longstanding project to a conclusion.

Even more than this central route, other routes reveal the new approach to infrastructure development pursued by Midhat. In his above-mentioned report to the central government, Midhat also asked for financial assistance to build an entirely new road connecting Niš with Vidin.⁴⁷⁵ The route on which traffic between the two cities ran previously had become slow and difficult because it crossed Serbian territory since the Ottoman–Serbian border had been re-adjusted in 1833. Connectivity decreased again when Serbia began to subject Ottoman through-traffic between Niš and Vidin to the quarantine and levelled extra import and export duties on the transported goods. To ensure unhindered communication and speed up the flow of trade between the two neighbouring Ottoman provinces of Niš and Vidin, Midhat planned a new road that bypassed Serbian territory. To the political and economic purpose of the new road a security aspect was added. It would give Ottoman police forces and the military access to an area that bandits used to hide and regroup. Completed in 1863 or 1864, this road crossed the Sveti Nikola range of the Balkan mountains, which remains until today a remote and impassable border area between Serbia and Bulgaria.

In addition to road construction, Midhat also invested in the service infrastructure related to transport. This not only concerned police stations and khans, but also the first Ottoman stagecoach service. In a memorandum written in November 1863,⁴⁷⁶ the governor remarked that people were now using carts on the new roads even in places where this had not been possible before. However, neither the ox carts of the local peasants nor the occasional horse cart (*Sirem arabasi*, i.e. of the type developed in Syrmia, the region between Sava and Danube) were able to utilise the roads to their full capacity. At the same time, people were not willing or

474 Riedler, 'Building Modern Infrastructures', 446–449.

475 Göyünç, 'Midhat Paşa', 313–316.

476 İ.L.MVL. 498/22521, doc. 1, 19 Cemazeyilevvel 1280/20 Teşrin-i Evvel 1279 (1 November 1863).

able to buy new and faster vehicles. In the absence of private Ottoman investors and foreign companies to respond to the evident demand for faster traffic, Midhat declared that he had gathered a group of rich traders, local notables and government officials who would act as founders and shareholders of a transport company. Such a company would organise a regular connection for passengers and goods between Niš and Plovdiv. Additionally, he proposed another stagecoach line operating between Niš and Vidin along the new road that bypassed Serbia. As the memorandum speculated, after a while these lines could even replace the official postal service and take over the post stations (*menzil*) and run them at a lower cost than that currently paid by the Imperial Treasury.

Unfortunately, we lack more detailed information about how the company was founded and who exactly its shareholders were. According to a short announcement in the official gazette of the Danube Province in 1865, it operated very successfully and had a rolling stock of 46 coaches and 129 horses. That same year, the company started a regular service to Edirne, which was possible because road construction had also picked up in that province.⁴⁷⁷

As the governor of the Danube Province, Midhat continued his efforts of infrastructure development on an even bigger territorial scale. The roads between the urban centres of the new province such as Ruse, Veliko Tarnovo (Tirnova), Shumen (Şumnu), Silistra (Silistre), Varna, Sofia, Vidin and Niš were modernised, and new roads were built to connect remote regions to these regional centres. Construction works were coordinated by a provincial council for public works, which employed its own engineers. With modest success, infrastructure development was also extended to the railway with a line running from Ruse to Varna and steam shipping on the Danube. These initiatives were an attempt to latch onto infrastructure development in the economically booming lower Danube region, where roads, canals, railroads and steamship lines were planned and constructed by European engineers with European capital.⁴⁷⁸

In Niš, railway construction did not play a role, yet, or rather did so only on the mental maps of railway planners. Several times, the city was included in railway concessions that foreign consortiums negotiated with the central government in Istanbul. For example, in 1860, it was to act as a terminus for a line planned – but never built – by a British group; the line was to run along the central route

⁴⁷⁷ *Tuna* 6, 23 Zilkade /7 Nisan 1281 (19 April 1865); *Tuna* 8, 7 Zilhicce/21 Nisan 1281 (3 May 1865).

⁴⁷⁸ Florian Riedler, 'Integrating the Danube into Modern Networks of Infrastructure: The Ottoman Contribution', *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 3, no. 5 (2020): 97–120.

from Istanbul to the Serbian border.⁴⁷⁹ Niš was also mentioned in the original concession that the group around Baron Hirsch, a Belgian financier and railway developer, won in 1869. Among other things, this concession included a line from Istanbul via Niš to Bosnia, thus connecting to the Austrian railway. However, after renegotiations, this central line, which was opened in 1871, ended 90 kilometres south-east of Sofia.⁴⁸⁰ Only in the post-Ottoman period was Niš first connected to the Serbian network and, in 1888, to the Bulgarian one. In this way it became a stop on the famous Orient Express running from Paris to Istanbul.

Overall, infrastructure development in general and particularly Midhat's road-building program was an important step on the path of establishing the Ottoman Empire as a modern territorial state. With the demarcation of the border between the Ottomans and Habsburgs as well as with its fortification, the Ottomans had already adopted one of the key elements of modern territoriality. While in the eighteenth century the rationale was to protect state territory from outside attacks, during the Tanzimat period the penetration, economic development and administration of the same territory was at stake.

Most immediately, the development of infrastructure can be linked to the economic side of the idea of territoriality and its implementation. Together with legal and institutional reforms, roads, and to a lesser degree also railroads, helped to boost the regional economy of Ottoman Europe that was based on the export of resources and, in the nineteenth century, saw a wave of proto-industrialisation. The economic boom reordered the regional geography of production and trade and thus had a direct spatial effect on Ottoman territory itself.⁴⁸¹

For Niš and its surrounding area, more research is needed to determine the exact effect of infrastructure development and other measures on the local economy. A study on the Pirot area has shown that the new roads brought the rural production areas closer to the urban markets, which benefited a class of local brokers and merchants who became important historical actors in the region.⁴⁸²

479 Boriana Antonova-Goleva, 'Concessions and Mirages along the Lower Danube: The Town of Silistria in the Plans of Foreign Railway Promoters during the Mid-1850s', *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies* 3, no. 5 (2020): 30.

480 Vahdettin Engin, *Rumeli Demiryolları* (Istanbul: Eren, 1993), 51–91.

481 Svetla Ianeva, 'Economic Transformations in the Central Rumelian Lands in the Nineteenth Century: An Overview', in *Ottoman Economic Practices in Periods of Transformation: The Cases of Crete and Bulgaria*, ed. Kate Fleet and Svetla Ianeva (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 113–140.

482 Nenad Stefanov, 'Tsaribrod, a Dot on the Line: A Microhistorical Approach to Societal Change along the Route in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *The Balkan Route*, ed. Florian Riedler and Nenad Stefanov (De Gruyter, 2021), 143–149 and id., *Die*

Infrastructure development was also linked, though more indirectly, to the reorganisation of Ottoman Europe from the traditional province of Rumelia into a structured administrative territory. We have already seen how the road-building program of the 1860s helped to consolidate the new larger provinces such as the Danube Province. Once again, infrastructure was the material basis for institutional reforms that would make these provinces the more or less uniform building blocks of an effectively run state territory where administrative decisions could be implemented more smoothly than before. In the case of Niš, the transformation of the region into an administrative territory had the most decisive effect at the sub-province (*sancak*) level. As the remainder of this chapter will show, from the 1830s to the 1860s the *sancak* of Niš began to take a shape that, arguably, still had an impact on the post-Ottoman territorial make-up.

Traditionally, Niš had been a part of the *sancak* of Semendire, which in the eighteenth century was usually called the Belgrade Pashalik. When the Habsburgs occupied Belgrade and the northern parts of the Pashalik, the importance of Niš rose considerably. Later the city also retained a central position because of its fortress and acted as the central government's base in the fight against the Belgrade *yamaks* as well as the Christian rebels in the Pashalik. After the latter had gained autonomy in 1815 in large parts of the Pashalik of Belgrade, Niš remained the biggest city on the Ottoman side of the border. Niš had a fortress commander (*muhafiz*), but he seemed not to have been the head of a regular *sancak* as had been the case in the eighteenth-century *sancak* of Semendire, where the *sancak* governor usually acted also as the *muhafiz* of Belgrade fortress. It seems that Niš and its district were formally included in the *sancak* of Sofia, which in 1815 was still the capital of Rumelia.⁴⁸³ In general, the development in the following decades shows that, similar to the situation in the eighteenth century, the geo-strategic position of Niš acting as a hinge not only between the emerging border with the Serbian Principality, but also between other Ottoman regions underscored the importance of the city.

The rapid and sweeping changes in Ottoman provincial administration in the framework of the early reform policy of the 1830s and 1840s had a profound effect on Niš, repositioning it as the centre of an emerging administrative territory. At the basis of these changes were Sultan Mahmud II's military reforms, which tasked governors of provinces (*eyalet*) and sub-provinces (*sancak*) to form new army units.

Erfindung der Grenzen auf dem Balkan: Von einer spätosmanischen Region zu nationalstaatlichen Peripherien: Pirot und Caribrod 1856–1989 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 66–75.

⁴⁸³ Fazıla Akbal, '1831 Tarihinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İdari Taksimat ve Nüfus', *Belleten* 15, no. 60 (1951): 617–628; Gergana Georgieva, 'Dynamics of Territorial Division of Rumelia Province', *Études Balkaniques* 148, no. 1–2 (2010): 172, 176.

Therefore, the former were awarded the military rank of field marshal (*müşir*) and the latter that of divisional general (*ferik*). Moreover, starting from 1836, large provinces were broken up into smaller units to diminish the power of their governors and to subject them to tighter control by the centre. Among these provinces was also Rumelia, formerly comprising almost the whole of Ottoman Europe. In the course of the reorganisation, Rumelia's centre was shifted to the regions of Macedonia and Albania, with its capital moving to Bitola (Manastır); the rest of Ottoman Europe was parcelled into administrative units that were still called *eyalets* although they were much smaller than before.⁴⁸⁴

This reorganisation was clearly an attempt at creating the administrative grid for further territorialising policies. However, this proved to be a long and drawn-out process: the borders of the new provinces were constantly reviewed as were the institutions of provincial administration in general.

In a work by Ami Boué, the Austrian geologist, describing Ottoman Europe in the second half of the 1830s, the new administrative units are designated as pashaliks. Some of them, e.g. Edirne, are clearly full-fledged provinces, while others appear to have had more of a sub-province size. This was also the case for Niš Pashalik, which, according to Boué, included the districts of Bela Palanka (Mustafa Paşa Palanka), Pirot (Şehirköy) and Tran (İznebol). The formerly separate Leskovac (Leskofça) Pashalik with its districts of Prokuplje (Ürgüb) and Kurşumlja (Kurşunlu) as well as the district of Kyustendil (Köstendil) had recently been attached to it.⁴⁸⁵ Regarding its core areas, this pashalik of Niš as described by Boué is very similar to the *sancak* of Niš as it emerged in the 1850s in the framework of the Tanzimat administrative system, as we will see below. However, as the indicated merger with the pashalik of Leskovac shows, the administrative units tended to be recombined frequently. Especially in outlying areas, there were always changes as e.g. in the case of Kyustendil, which was later attached to Sofia.

According to another source, the pashalik of Niš was originally part of post-1836 smaller Rumelia, but by 1839 it was joined to the province of Sofia together with Prishtina in Eastern Kosovo and Tetovo in northern Macedonia.⁴⁸⁶

The Ottoman court historian Lutfi refers to an *eyalet* of Niš created in 1839. He says nothing about the extent of this new province, but it seems to be identical with the combined Niš and Sofia Pashaliks just mentioned. Lutfi gives additional

484 Nizam Önen and Cenk Reyhan, *Mülkten Ülkeye: Türkiye'de Taşra İdaresinin Dönüşümü (1839–1929)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2011), 121–132; Franz Babinger, 'Rumeli, Rumelien', in *Enzyklopädie des Islām*, vol. 3. (Leiden: Brill, 1936).

485 Ami Boué, *La Turquie d'Europe* (Paris: Bertrand, 1840), 3:186.

486 Joseph Müller, *Albanien, Rumelien und die österreichisch-montenegrinische Gränze* (Prague: Calve, 1844), 3.

information about the reason as to why this new province was formed: the governor of Vidin had asked the Ottoman government to alert all officials and military officers in the areas bordering the Serbian Principality that Miloš, the Serbian Prince, planned to incite revolutionary uprisings in Bulgaria, Bosnia, Hercegovina and Montenegro. To strengthen the border with Serbia, a new province was created to which the Vidin governor's son in law was appointed as governor. This was Mehmed Vasıf Pasha, a military officer with a Georgian background, who remained in Niš for less than a year before he was posted to Silistra; he became governor of Niš for a second time in 1845, this time for approximately five years.⁴⁸⁷

The new province of Niš was born in the dynamic period of administrative reform at the beginning of the Tanzimat and was shaped by military and political considerations as well as career and family networks within the Ottoman elite. This is further illustrated by an official letter to the Supreme Council in Istanbul written in summer 1841.⁴⁸⁸ The author was Mehmed İsmet Pasha, governor of Niš with the rank of a *ferik* and successor of the unlucky Sabri Pasha under whom the peasant revolt had erupted. The letter gives a rare insight into territorial thinking from the perspective of an Ottoman official. The governor addressed his superiors in the capital, complaining about the institutional changes in the system of tax collection. The new tax official (*muhassıl*) sent to the region was not residing in Niš but in Sofia, and only a deputy – who was incompetent in the governor's humble opinion – was appointed to Niš. To ensure good government as prescribed by the Tanzimat and especially for its Christian inhabitants (this was most certainly a nod to the recent troubles), Niš needed a full set of the new institutions, including a tax official and a council. In the eyes of its governor, especially the geostrategic situation of Niš on an internal border of Ottoman territory gave it a high significance. While some of its districts such as Prokuplje, Kuršumlja and Leskovac were part of the Albanian lands (Arnavutluk), other districts such as Pirot and Tran were oriented towards Sofia as a centre.

This depiction of Niš at a geostrategic hinge – İsmet Pasha calls it a 'delicate place' (*mevki-i nazike*), i.e. one that needed careful handling – is highly instructive. While early modern European travellers had frequently indicated that Niš sat

487 Ahmed Lûtfî, *Vak'anüvis Ahmed Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi*, ed. Nuri Akbayar (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 1999), 4–5:943 (5:139); Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, ed. Nuri Akbayar and Seyit Ali Kahraman (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1996), 5:1653.

488 İ..MVL. 29/491, doc. 1, 11 Cemziyelahir 1257 (31 July 1841).

on the border between 'Serbia' and 'Bulgaria',⁴⁸⁹ from the Ottoman internal perspective, the location at the border to 'Albania' was highlighted. We have already mentioned the close economic relations of Niš with Kosovo; in the late eighteenth century, considerations of security began to play a role, too, when public order in the Albanian lands was threatened by banditry.⁴⁹⁰ As we have seen in chapter four, Niš was increasingly perceived as an access point for the central government to fight bandits, warlords and rebels not only in Vidin and Belgrade, but also in Kosovo and northern Albania. As late as 1863, according to this thinking, the districts of Gjakova and Peja (İpek, Peć) in Kosovo were joined to the province of Niš so that Governor Midhat Pasha could deal directly with the situation and re-establish full control over the region.⁴⁹¹

On a political level, İsmet Pasha's letter shows how the system of provincial administration was still not fully settled. In its answer, the Supreme Council did not endorse the governor's proposal to assign a tax official to Niš. They regarded Sofia as the more important place, still referring to it as the heart (*kalbgah*) of Rumelia, while Niš was considered too insignificant and – one could conclude – only nominally the main place of the *eyalet*. The only thing they offered to İsmet was for him to have a say in who would become the deputy tax official in Niš.⁴⁹²

The development of Niš Province as an administrative territory becomes easier to follow when, starting with the year 1263 AH (1846/1847), the official yearbooks (*salname*) of the Ottoman Empire began to be published. In the first issue of the yearbook, Niš Province was listed with Sofia, Samakov and Kyustendil as dependent *sancaks*.⁴⁹³ This remained the administrative division until the province was integrated into the new Danube Province in 1864.

From 1855 onwards, the yearbooks also give information on the extension of the sub-province of Niš within the larger province: it was composed of the districts of Niš, Berkovitsa (Berkovça), Piro (Şehirköy), Prokuplje (Ürgüb), Kurşumlija (Kurşunlu) and Leskovac (Leskovça).⁴⁹⁴ In this list, the extension of the sub-province eastward to Berkovitsa, a town in present-day Bulgaria 80 kilometres north of Sofia, is remarkable, while Tran, which before had been governed from Niš,

489 E.g. Hans Dernschwam, *Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553/55)*, ed. Franz Babinger, transl. Jörg Riecke (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2014), 9 (48); Stephan Gerlach, *Tage-Buch* (Frankfurt: Johann-David Zünners, 1674), 524.

490 Frederick F. Anscombe, 'Albanians and "Mountain Bandits"', in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2006).

491 Göyünç, 'Midhat Paşa'nın Niş Valiliği', 282–284.

492 İ..MVL. 29/491, doc. 2, n.d.

493 *Salnâme-i Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye 1263* (Istanbul: Tabhane-i Âmire), 81.

494 *Salnâme-i Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye 1271* (Istanbul: Tabhane-i Âmire), 76.

was now part of the sub-province of Samakov. Only in 1864 shortly before the Danube Province was created do we see the next significant change, again on the periphery: Tran and Vranje (İvranye) were added to the sub-province of Niš; in the next year, Berkovitsa was taken out and added to the sub-province of Vidin.⁴⁹⁵

The road construction program that was started by Midhat as governor of Niš and continued through the following decade reflects the process of the formation of an administrative territory in Ottoman Europe on a sub-provincial level. While above we have focused on those new roads that connected regional centres, there was also a new network of smaller roads that addressed traffic and communication on a local level. Until 1868, in the *sancak* of Niš connections to Kuršumlja in the west, to Vranje in the south and to Tran in the south-east were either modernised or built from scratch.⁴⁹⁶ At the end of the 1860s another new road connecting Pirot with Berkovitsa was opened.⁴⁹⁷ Although at that time Berkovitsa was no longer part of the *sancak* of Niš, the new road still had the economic benefit of giving access to the hitherto unconnected area in the east.

The road network built in the 1860s stabilised the sub-province of Niš that had been forming in the previous decades as an administrative unit. However, it did not fundamentally alter its in-between position in the regional structure of Ottoman Europe, as shown by the frequent reshuffles in territorial administration that started in the late 1860s. In 1869 the sub-province of Niš was first detached from the Danube Province and integrated into a newly formed province of Prizren, only to be switched back again in 1874.⁴⁹⁸ Just a few years later, in 1877, the *sancak* of Niš was again made part of a new province of Kosovo. However, these changes had little chance to take hold before the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877–78 and the subsequent fundamental reorganisation of the whole region after the Ottoman defeat. This reorganisation for the first time introduced ethnographic principles for the new borders of Serbia and Bulgaria. The next chapter will examine in detail how the Ottoman territorial order that was built on administrative, strategic and also economic principles reacted to the principle of ethnic identity that was introduced from outside.

495 *Salnâme-i Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye* 1281 (Istanbul: Tabhane-i Âmire), 164; *Salnâme-i Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye* 1282 (Istanbul: Tabhane-i Âmire), 151.

496 *Salname-i Vilayet-i Tuna* 1285, p. 113, “Vilayet dahilinde bulunan tarik ve maabir”.

497 Felix Kanitz, *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan: Historisch-geographisch-ethnographische Reise-studien aus den Jahren 1860–1876*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Fries, 1877) 316, 360.

498 Yücel Yiğit, ‘Prizren Sancağı’nın İdari Yapısı (1864–1912)’, *History Studies* 2 (2010): 126–130.

7 Post-Ottoman Niš



Fig. 7.1: Islam Aga Mosque with minaret missing its cone shaped roof. Meanwhile it has been restored. Photograph by Florian Riedler, 2012.

In present-day Niš, buildings from the Ottoman period such as the fortress or the two main churches are an exception. Rather, it is the absence of Ottoman architectural remains that characterises the city. Because the Ottoman residential architecture was almost exclusively built from wood, at first glance it is not surprising that after almost 150 years, none of it remains. However, in the case of the twelve-odd mosques whose minarets distinguished the skyline of Ottoman Niš, this absence is not due to natural decay. In the weeks following the Serbian occupation of the city in January 1878, most of them were destroyed so that today only remnants of three mosques remain. They stand for different timelines and ways in which the material remains from the Ottoman past became a legacy in the present.

Inside the fortress from whence the civilian population was evicted in 1878, Edirneli Bali Mosque survived without its minaret because it was put to use as a powder magazine by the Serbian army. After the fortress was abandoned by the Yugoslav army in the 1960s and opened to the public again, the mosque was renovated and now serves as an exhibition space. The mosque of the nearby Belgrad Quarter outside the fortress was used by the small Muslim community that remained in the city after 1878. Today it exists only as a ruin because it was hit in an air raid in the Second World War and plans to revive it have not materialised as yet. Islam Aga Mosque (Islam-agina džamija) in the left bank city a few hundred meters west of King Milan Square shows the greatest sense of continuity. Presently, it is the only mosque in Niš that is still used as a place of worship. According to an inscription on the building, its founder was one İslam Ağa, i.e. the *çiftlik* owner Molla İslam we encountered in the preceding chapter. In 1870 he endowed the mosque that was erected on the foundations of an older mosque.⁴⁹⁹ Islam Aga Mosque was damaged in an arsonist attack in 2004 by Serbian nationalist protesters in revenge for the attacks on churches in Kosovo. Although quickly repaired, for ten years its minaret remained without its iconic cone shaped roof, before this was restored, too. Today the mosque is open for regular Friday prayers for the Muslim community of Niš.

The final chapter of this study will address the end and afterlife of the Ottoman presence in Niš. This includes the sudden erasure of urban structures and the vanishing of groups of inhabitants from the city, but also the protracted survival of certain remnants and urban communities and how they became a legacy of Ottoman times. 1878, the year when Niš with its surrounding region ceased to be part of the Ottoman Empire, is usually understood as a rupture and turning point in the overall history of Southeast Europe. For the Ottoman Empire, the

499 E.H. Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimârî Eserleri: Yugoslavya* (Istanbul: Bilmen, 1981), vol. 3/3:130.

year marked the climax of a decade of crises that saw state bankruptcy (1875), local revolts in Hercegovina and Bosnia (1875), the rapid succession of two sultans (1876), and total defeat in the 1877–78 war against Russia, resulting in a refugee crisis and territorial losses in the subsequent peace treaties of San Stefano (March 1878) and Berlin (July 1878). Overall, in the conventional periodisation, historians have chosen the year 1876, the ascension of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), to mark the end of the Tanzimat era.

From the perspective of the national historiographies of the Balkan successor states, the 1870s have also been treated as a watershed that resulted in the full independence of Serbia, Montenegro and Romania and the creation of an autonomous Bulgaria. These states adopted nationalism as their basic principle of sovereignty and began to pursue an expansionist policy that often ended in the ethnic homogenisation of newly acquired territories.⁵⁰⁰

As we will see below, many of these general threads of interpretation tied to the year 1878 also run through the history of Niš, the annexation of the *sancak* of Niš by Serbia and the policies of integrating these New Areas (*novi krajevi*) as they were called in official Serbian parlance. However, the focus in this final chapter will be slightly different. In contrast to the conventional narrative of a total rupture, this chapter will take care to uncover the little-known continuities that link Ottoman with Serbian Niš. As throughout, I seek to question the teleological nature of the end of Ottoman rule as it is put forward in the nationalist narrative and substitute it with a more nuanced picture. Such a narrative was often formulated with hindsight of the later developments in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and therefore distorts our understanding of historical events and the choices available to the historical actors in the 1870s.⁵⁰¹

The first section of this chapter will examine the new territorial order that was forcefully established in Ottoman Europe as a consequence of the wars and international peace treaties in the period between 1876 and 1878. This order build on the territorialisation processes we have observed earlier, but also brought many of its contradictions to the fore. The Ottoman *sancak* of Niš was partly allocated to the now independent Serbia and partly also to the new autonomous Bulgarian Principality. The first priority of consolidating the new territorial order was to draw international borders in a region where hitherto only the quite hazy

500 For one of many examples, see M. Hakan Yavuz and Peter Sluglett, 'Introduction: Laying the Foundations for Future Instability', in *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. by id. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 1–13.

501 Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800–1912* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 6 and passim.

and flexible internal boundaries between the administrative units of the Ottoman state had existed. The difficulties this created were mirrored by the problems of implementing the new order inside the New Areas. This concerned property and population, most importantly the question of whether Muslim refugees would be allowed to return and what would happen to the real estate they had left behind. The fact that these issues remained on the agenda for roughly a decade shows that the Ottoman order did not just vanish overnight.

The second section will zoom in on the city of Niš, examining the immediate consequences of the occupation by the Serbian army. It will address the consequences of the short- and long-term transformation of the built environment and the structure of the city. Contemporaries and modern scholarship have alternately labelled this transformation an occidentalisation, modernisation, de-Ottomanisation or de-Islamisation. By drawing parallels to other Balkan cities, the section attempts to differentiate this transformation and discern different phases, driven by different actors with their own material and ideological agendas. This approach will offer an example of how de-Ottomanisation in Southeastern Europe was nuanced not only by different national traditions, but that even regional experiences as well as the interaction between central state and local urban society could influence the trajectory of change.⁵⁰²

As an epilogue, the last section will address the small group of Muslims that remained in Serbian Niš for some years, concentrating in the Belgrad Quarter and its mosque. With very few exceptions, these Muslims were not the founders of a new community of Serbian Muslims, but rather Ottoman citizens who stayed on to ensure a speedy liquidation of their properties and to negotiate compensation as it was agreed in the Treaty of Berlin. To the degree the transfer of property was completed, this group of the last Ottomans of Niš left the city and relocated to Kosovo, Macedonia or Istanbul. Subsequently, they vanished among the mass of Muslim refugees that continued to enter the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

502 Maximilian Hartmuth, 'Negotiating Tradition and Ambition: A Comparative Perspective on the "De-Ottomanisation" of Balkan Cityscapes', *Ethnologia Balkanica* 10 (2006): 15–33.

7.1 A New Territorial Order

The conquest of Niš by the Serbian army in January 1878, the occupation of the *sancak* of Niš and adjacent areas and the subsequent integration of parts of the occupied territory into the Serbian state were in no way predetermined. This was true despite a marked shift in Serbia towards more nationalist and expansionist policies in the preceding decades. The Serbian government under Prince Mihailo had been acting more and more aggressively towards its Ottoman suzerain, succeeding e.g. in negotiating the 1867 withdrawal of the remaining imperial troops from Belgrade. The Serbian authorities also supported Bulgarian nationalist bands as well as a Serbian network of informers and potential revolutionaries in Bosnia. This was the main target of Serbian irredentist policies, other Ottoman provinces such as Kosovo, Macedonia and Niš were secondary. Only in 1874 was a small Serbian nationalist committee that secretly worked for a local uprising against Ottoman rule founded in the city.⁵⁰³

Much more than nationalist ideology or a clear-cut plan for political action, contingent developments in international politics determined Niš as the target of Serbian expansion. The context was what contemporaries dubbed the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875–1878, a diplomatic and military crisis that was triggered by events in the Ottoman Empire but was essentially about the Great Powers' relations among each other. In summer 1875 a conflict over taxes erupted between the Ottoman authorities and some Orthodox villages in Herzegovina. While the causes of the initial tax dispute as well as the reaction of the authorities were not dissimilar to the events in Niš in 1841, several factors gave this *prima facie* local event an international significance. While a compromise could not be reached between the Ottoman authorities and the villagers, the Ottoman military was also not able to control the situation when bandits operating from neighbouring Montenegro interfered. Christian peasants fleeing to Dalmatia to escape the violence involved Austria-Hungary, while mostly Panslavist but also 'republican' or 'revolutionary' volunteers from many parts of Europe started to support the growing revolt that also spread to certain parts of Bosnia. Finally, events were well-reported in the European press, which influenced public opinion, especially in Great Britain and in Russia, in favour of the insurgents.⁵⁰⁴

503 David MacKenzie, 'Serbian Nationalist and Military Organizations and the Piedmont Idea, 1844–1914', *East European Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1982); 'Niški Komitet', *Niški Leksikon* (Belgrade: JP Službeni glasnik, 2011), 345–346.

504 Hannes Grandits, *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia: Conflicting Agencies and Imperial Appropriations* (London: Routledge, 2022), 82–130.

Montenegro and Serbia materially supported the revolts in Herzegovina and Bosnia by allowing armed bands of volunteers to operate from their territories. As a final step in the spiral of escalation, in summer 1876 both vassal states also declared war on their Ottoman suzerain to anticipate a punitive exhibition they feared the Ottomans were preparing. Official Russia, and to a certain degree also Austria-Hungary, tolerated this war, but did not (yet) diplomatically endorse it. Russian support for Serbia largely came from outside the government: the Serbian army and especially its officer corps was staffed by a large number of Russian Panslavist volunteers, most prominently the Russian ex-general Cherniaev. The latter was appointed chief of the Serbian army and as such determined the general course of operations against Niš, Bela Palanka and Pirot. However, the advance of the Serbian army was blocked by a successful Ottoman counteroffensive that brought Serbia to the brink of collapse. A Russian ultimatum enforced a ceasefire, before in February 1877, a peace treaty between the Ottomans and the Serbian Principality restored the territorial *status quo ante*.⁵⁰⁵

Niš could only be conquered by the Serbian army in a second campaign as part of the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877–78. Russia declared war in April 1877 after the Ottoman government had rejected an ultimatum to implement a reform plan drawn up by the Great Powers in favour of its Christian subjects; this will be examined in greater detail below. The Russian government was increasingly influenced by the Panslavic Russian public that demanded action to help the ‘Slavic brothers’ in the Balkans. Because the Russian army could not score a quick victory against the Ottoman defence at the Danube and for months was bogged down in front of the fortress of Plevna (Plevna), Russia urged the Serbian government to open a second front by entering the war. Serbia, still ruing the earlier defeat, did not want to engage and only committed itself in December, when the Russian army had finally conquered Plevna. The Serbian army moved towards Sofia to tie up Ottoman forces while the Russian army advanced south across the Balkan mountain range. Stripped of their garrisons who were fighting at the Danube, Niš and Pirot quickly surrendered, and Vranje also fell when a part of the Serbian army advanced south in the direction of Kosovo. In the end of January 1877 when the Russian army had occupied Edirne and had almost reached Istanbul, an armistice was concluded.⁵⁰⁶

505 Carl Mayers, *Der serbisch-türkische Krieg im Jahre 1876* (Wien: Bloch & Hasbach, 1877), 10–15; Gale Stokes, ‘Serbian Military Doctrine and the Crisis of 1875–78’, in *Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, ed. Bela K. Kiraly and Gale Stokes (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1985), 261–274; Grandits, *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia*, 175–221.

506 Grandits, *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia*, 249–251.

The Ottoman defeat offered the Great Powers the opportunity to implement a new territorial order in the Balkans, which repositioned Niš in a new geo-strategical environment. On a higher level, the redesigning of states and frontiers that the Russians forced upon the Ottoman Empire in the Treaty of San Stefano, which was modified some months later by all the other Powers at the Berlin Congress, demonstrates the evolution of territorial thinking in this context. To understand the new order of 1878 as well as its consequences, it is helpful to examine how it developed out of the then-recent international crisis. In a second step, we will then discuss how Serbia re-formatted the territory it had conquered to make the New Areas an integral part of Serbia.

As a reaction to the revolt in Hercegovina and Bosnia, the Great Powers wanted to force the Ottoman Empire to adopt certain reforms concerning the rights and representation of its Christian subjects. To Bosnia, they had added a 'Bulgarian Question' since a series of short-lived and small-scale uprisings sparked by Bulgarian revolutionaries in some regions of the eastern Balkans had been put down by the Ottoman authorities in April 1876. As a strategy to address these issues and hoping to increase international stability, the Great Powers pushed for a further territorialisation of the Ottoman Christians' rights in the Balkans. This was a well-established model that had been tried previously, for example in the island of Samos (1832), in Mount Lebanon (1861) and in Crete (1867). In all of these cases, under the combined pressure of local demands and Great Power intervention, the sultan had been forced to create autonomous provinces that were administered by Christian governors and whose inhabitants were enjoying special rights. On the background of an Ottoman tradition of recognising local difference and autonomy, it was easy for the Ottoman government to rationalise such interference as a lesser evil. As the dynamics of the Greek revolt (1821–30) had shown, there was always the possibility that the European powers would sponsor break-away Ottoman provinces to become independent states.⁵⁰⁷

The old Ottoman vassals Walachia and Moldavia as well Montenegro and Serbia, which had become autonomous more recently, were also integrated into the international system dominated by the Great Powers. According to the Treaty of Paris, which concluded the Crimean War, these vassals remained dependent on their Ottoman suzerain, but their rights and privileges were guaranteed by the treaty powers. To the Ottomans, this was acceptable because it repackaged a

⁵⁰⁷ Elektra Kostopoulou, 'Armed Negotiations: The Institutionalization of the Late Ottoman Locality', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 3 (2013): 295–309.

traditional system of dependence and integrated it into the contemporary state system that the Ottoman Empire as a whole was made part of.⁵⁰⁸

In a similar way, the British, Russian, French, German and Italian ambassadors to the Porte who assembled for the Conference of Constantinople in December 1876 and January 1877 addressed the recent crisis in Bosnia. They proposed to create three autonomous provinces in the Balkans in which Christians would be represented in the administration and the police force according to their share of the population and would enjoy special cultural, religious and legal rights guaranteed and supervised by the Great Powers.⁵⁰⁹ The three provinces proposed in this plan were Bosnia (with Hercegovina) as well as two provinces grouped under the name Bulgaria. Niš would have been part of the western Bulgarian province comprising the Ottoman sub-provinces of Sofia, Vidin, Niš, Skopje, and parts of the sub-provinces of Bitola, Serres and Salonica. The eastern Bulgarian province centring on Tarnovo was to include large parts of the Danube and Edirne provinces. Proposing two Bulgarian provinces was to counter a Russian demand of one autonomous Bulgaria. Especially the British ambassador wanted to prevent such an autonomous territory dominated by Slavs, who were deemed natural allies of Russia.⁵¹⁰

Not surprisingly, the ambassadors' reform plan was politely rejected by the Ottoman side because it was understood as a blatant interference into Ottoman internal affairs. Moreover, that an international commission would check on the progress of implementing the plan was unacceptable to the Ottomans.⁵¹¹ As a proof of the empire's general willingness to implement reforms, the Ottoman delegates pointed to the first Ottoman constitution that was proclaimed in December 1876, at the time the conference held its first plenary session. It had been drafted by a group of Tanzimat bureaucrats around Midhat Pasha, who was appointed grand vizier at the moment of its proclamation. The ambassadors, snubbing this gesture, instead insisted on a detailed discussion of their reform proposals and called for its official endorsement or rejection.

508 Peter Haldén, 'A Non-Sovereign Modernity: Attempts to Engineer Stability in the Balkans 1820–90', *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 348–353.

509 *Turkey. No. 2 (1877): Correspondence Respecting the Conference at Constantinople and the Affairs of Turkey: 1876–77*, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Command Papers C.1641 91, inclosure 4 in no. 135, compte-rendu no. 8, 21 December 1876, annex 2 and 3, 150–166.

510 *Ibid.*, inclosure 1 in no. 56, 8 December 1876, 42–48; *ibid.*, no. 167, Salisbury to Derby, Pera, 4 January 1877, 215–216.

511 *Ibid.*, no. 186, memorandum [about a visit by Musurus Pasha and Odian Efendi to Lord Beaconsfield], 13 January 1877, 259–260.

As the Ottoman delegates acknowledged, many of the proposals concerning the organisation of regional councils or financial and judiciary arrangements were reasonable and within the limits of the law of provincial administration and the Ottoman constitution.⁵¹² However, in general, they doubted the rationality of tampering with an established system of provincial administration and especially criticised the idea of the two Bulgarian provinces that would destroy the existing administrative make-up. Most notably, they were opposed to dismantling the Danube Province, which had been created as a model province for a more efficient and more just administration. According to the Ottoman delegates, a province of Bulgaria was hitherto unknown, and the name was only used starting with the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate. Moreover, such 'Bulgarian' provinces would certainly be rejected by the Greek speakers to be integrated within them.

By mentioning the Bulgarian Exarchate, the Ottoman delegates touched in passing upon a key issue. Although it was never openly stated, the proposed borders of the two Bulgarian provinces suggest that the ambassadors, indeed, were thinking of the Exarchate when they drafted their plan. It must have been particularly frustrating for the Ottoman side to see that the Exarchate, devised as a means to counter Bulgarian nationalism by awarding cultural rights to a certain group of Orthodox Christians, was now being used to create two provinces that had the potential to turn into a Bulgarian nation state in the near term. It may have been frustrating, but it hardly could have been surprising, because it must have been clear to the Ottoman politicians that the Exarchate meant different things to different parties.

Very instructive for how the Exarchate was viewed as more than just a church organisation is the report of the Austro-Hungarian consul in Prizren about his tour to Skopje and Niš in 1874.⁵¹³ In the consul's focus was the ongoing struggle in those two places between the newly nominated Exarchist bishops and those from the Patriarchate. The diocese of Skopje was split along an urban-rural divide, the city dwellers supporting the Exarchate bishop and the countryside the traditional hierarchy. In contrast, the consul explains the situation in the diocese of Niš in a very different way. Because the population of Leskovac, Niš and Pirot was of

⁵¹² Ibid., inclosure 2 in no. 168, 2nd protocol, sitting of the 11th Zilhidjé 1293 (December 16/28, 1876), 240–242; inclosure 3 in no. 230, 9th protocol, sitting of the 5th Mouharrem, 1294, 20 January 1877, 366

⁵¹³ Lippich to Andrassy, Prizren, 5 October 1874, HHStA, PA XXXVIII/203, n. f., in: *Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo und im serbisch beherrschten Kosovo, 1870–1914: Berichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Konsuln aus dem zentralen Balkan*, ed. Oliver Jens Schmitt, Eva Frantz, and Sven Mörsdorf (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2020), vol. 1, no. 23, 111–119.

‘Serbian nationality’, it did not support the ‘party of the Bulgarian Church’ and was totally opposed to the attempts to Bulgarise liturgy and education. The Serbs of Niš even criticised the recent administrative reform in which their *sancak* had been reattached to the Danube Province. For them, the Danube Province counted as a Bulgarian province, which made them fear that their cultural and political demands would not be considered fairly by the provincial authorities in Ruse.⁵¹⁴

In general, the Austro-Hungarian consul saw nationality as the key issue determining not only the church question, but also the overall political future of the region. Serbs in Niš (and also in Prizren) would look forward to a future Great Serbia, while the Bulgarians in Skopje would seek to be part of a ‘possible autonomous Bulgaria’.⁵¹⁵ Regarding the concept of nationality, the consul was admittedly more careful than others, e.g. he conceded that it was possible that the Bulgarians of Skopje would ultimately self-identify as Macedonians. However, like so many other contemporaries, especially those in the European cabinets, the consul was clearly convinced that the concept of nationality was the best way to reflect reality. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that this world view together with a national reading of the Exarchate was largely shared by the ambassadors at the Constantinople Conference.

In contrast, the idea to create an autonomous territory for Bulgarians on the basis of their church organisation negated the Ottoman approach to reform, which ‘repels race-classification, and [...] desires, on the contrary, the fusion of races’, as one of the Ottoman delegates at the Constantinople Conference put it.⁵¹⁶ This common but easily misunderstood slogan of the Tanzimat referred to the fusion of different parts of Ottoman society into one *political* nation. This was complemented by another popular concept of the Tanzimat, that of *vatan* (fatherland), which, however, was not mentioned in this particular context of the negotiations at the Constantinople Conference. The concept of *vatan* advocated a territorial fusion: out of the different lands of the Ottoman Empire, one uniform territory was to be formed that could evoke similar feelings of loyalty, trust and love as the homeland or place of birth, the traditional meaning of *vatan*.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 113, 117.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 114.

⁵¹⁶ *Turkey. No. 2 (1877)*, inclosure 2 in no. 168, 2nd protocol, sitting of the 11th Zilhidjé 1293 (December 16/28, 1876), 241; also see *ibid.*, inclosure 1 in no. 227, 5th protocol, sitting of the 19th Zilhidjé, 1293 (December 23 1876/January 4, 1877), 319 and *ibid.*, inclosure 1 in no. 230, 7th protocol, sitting of the 26th Zilhidjé, 1293 (December 30, 1876/January 11, 1877), 351.

⁵¹⁷ Alexander Veznekov, ‘Reconciliation of the Spirits and Fusion of the Interests: “Ottomanism” as an Identity Politics’, in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 23, 37–38.

The relation to territory that the Tanzimat bureaucrats adopted went along with the understanding of sovereignty as enshrined in the new constitution. The linkage was expressed in the first article of the constitution that declares the empire an 'indivisible whole from which no part can ever be detached.' At the Constantinople Conference, it was expressed best by the Ottoman foreign minister in a statement to the ambassadors:

The principle of equality which forms the principal feature of the Imperial Constitution is not to be applied only to all the members of the great Ottoman family, but also, and in the first instance, to every one of those parts of which the Ottoman Empire is composed, whatever may be its geographical situation or its ethnological character. All are to have a common lot, to enjoy the same advantages, to be subject to the same authority, and to submit to the same laws. To infringe on this principle would be to compromise the work of the re-construction of the Empire, to prepare the disintegration of its national elements, to set up a formidable antagonism between the provinces, and, in short, to sow the seeds of new causes of disturbance and of rebellion.⁵¹⁸

This approach was the result of the ongoing codification of rights for all Ottoman subjects combined with the effort to create a uniform administration in all parts of the empire, as we have observed in many instances in the previous chapters. The new understanding of territory was incompatible with special legal arrangements, privileges and autonomy for certain provinces. What made the Ottoman bureaucrats state this in such an uncompromising manner was perhaps the dubious principle of ethnicity or nationality on which the Bulgarian provinces were to be built – a principle that had largely been missing in earlier examples for autonomy or was unproblematic in the case of clearly defined territories such as islands.

The Ottoman delegates, backed by public opinion and the votes of an assembly of notables, voiced their rejection of the ambassadors' demands, but at the same time started several initiatives to reach a compromise. Mainly, the Ottoman side wanted to integrate the constitution, which was to serve as the yardstick of reform, into any future agreement with the Great Powers.⁵¹⁹ Additionally, some details of a reorganisation in provincial administration, implemented in February 1877 but obviously planned beforehand when the conference was still in session, can also

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., inclosure 1 in no. 168, 1st protocol, sitting of the 6th Zilhidjé, 1293 (December 11/23 1876), 227.

⁵¹⁹ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 392–394.

be understood in this context. In this reorganisation a new sub-province of Pirot, combined from the districts of Pirot, Tran and Breznik, was created; it was headed by the Christian governor Yovaňo Efendi (or Jurdanço Pasha), who had been an official in the administration of the Danube Province and a former governor (*kaymakam*) of Gabrovo, a town near Tarnovo.⁵²⁰ Possibly, the Ottoman government wanted to demonstrate with the creation of this sub-province that it took into consideration some of the demands for better protection of Christian rights.

At the same time, the reorganisation of 1877 also seems to have been designed as a safeguard against ethnically homogenous provinces that could claim autonomy in the future. The sub-province of Pirot was integrated into a new Kosovo Province (also including the sub-provinces of Skopje, Debre, Novi Pazar and Niš) with its new capital Prishtina. The sub-province of Niš was severed from the Sofia Province, which had been created only in the previous year and now vanished because it was assigned to the province of Edirne.⁵²¹ The Austro-Hungarian consul in Prizren saw this as a strategy to weaken the 'Bulgarian' population and distribute them among different administrative units. In particular, he read the name Kosovo as an ominous sign of Muslim supremacy.⁵²²

This new administrative outlay did not have any lasting influence because of the Russian-Ottoman war starting in April. The plans for a geo-political reorganisation of Ottoman Europe first discussed at the Constantinople Conferences were taken up again after the war, however, this time under dramatically altered circumstances. Because of its military victory, Russia could dictate a peace treaty to the Ottoman Empire, which was concluded in February 1878 in San Stefano (today Yeşilköy), a suburb of Istanbul at the Marmara Sea. The treaty forced the Ottoman Empire to recognise Montenegro, Serbia and Romania as independent states and created an autonomous Bulgarian Principality within borders defined on the 'principle of nationality'. These borders were in many places even more extensive than those proposed at the Conference of Constantinople for the two Bulgarian provinces modelled on the Bulgarian Exarchate. However, to a certain extent, Russia also had to compensate its ally Serbia. On the western border of the Bulgarian Principality, Serbian occupied Niš and its district was to be integrated

520 See http://bulrod.blogspot.com/2011/03/blog-post_1571.html.

521 *Salname-i Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye* 1294, pp. 434–435; *Salname-i Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye* 1295, pp. 336–339. The Austrian consul claims that the sub-province of Sofia became part of the province of Kosovo. See next footnote.

522 Lippich to Andrassy, Prizren, 5 February 1877, HHStA, PA XXXVIII/219, f. 17r–19v, in: Schmitt et. al., *Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo*, vol. 1, no. 41, 192–194; Lippich to Andrassy, Prizren, 17 March 1877, HHStA, PA XXXVIII/219, f. 33r–54v., in: Schmitt et. al., *Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo*, vol. 1, no. 44, 202–213.

into Serbia, although in previous discussions, as part of the Exarchate, it always had formed part of a future Bulgaria. Other territories also under Serbian military control such as the sub-province of Pirot or the district of Vranje were to be evacuated by the Serbian army and integrated into the new principality.⁵²³

The Serbian government vehemently opposed this territorial redistribution. The Russians had blocked any Serbian expansion in Bosnia because they recognised Austria-Hungary's interests. Therefore, Serbia had hoped to be compensated with the whole territory occupied by its military beyond the sub-province of Niš. When the new territorial order was renegotiated a couple of months later among all the Great Powers assembled in Berlin, Serbia reiterated its claim to territories including the regions of Niš, Vidin, Pirot and Tran. While Serbia was not successful in securing any territory in the north-east, i.e. in Vidin, and also had to abandon its claims on Tran, it managed to secure Niš, including the district of Vranje and half of the district of Pirot.

In the actual negotiations, these areas were relatively freely swapped also as compensation for what happened in other parts of the borders of the new Bulgarian Principality. The reason was that the negotiators could not agree on any single principle for determining the border between Serbia and Bulgaria. Most importantly, the principle of nationality or ethnicity that had inspired the ambassadors at the Constantinople Conference was never taken into serious consideration. In the mountainous region between Pirot in the north and Kiustendil in the south called Šopluk, there were no criteria such as language, religion or culture to decide whether the population was to be considered as Serbian or Bulgarian. Likewise, a referendum that the Serbian prime minister Ristić proposed for the districts of Pirot and Tran was not taken up by the Great Powers. Similar problems were faced concerning the new Serbian-Ottoman border between the New Areas and the Kosovo Province. In the end, the Treaty of Berlin sketched the new border very roughly and left its exact course and demarcation to a special commission.⁵²⁴

The international border commission started its work in October 1878 and finished the following June. Its task was to define the border on the available maps and on the ground. In the case of the border between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire, the limits of the *sancak* of Niš were taken as a rough guide, while between Serbia and the Principality of Bulgaria, an entirely new border had to be drawn.

523 See article 3 and 6 of the San Stefano treaty on the new borders of Serbia and Bulgaria. *Turkey. No. 22 (1878): Preliminary Treaty of Peace Between Russia and Turkey*, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Command Papers, C.1973, 10–11. On the negotiations see Jelena Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy: Property in Transition to Nation-State in Post-Ottoman Niš' (PhD Thesis, Princeton University, 2020), 72–74.

524 Gaston Gravier, *Les frontières historiques de la Serbie* (Paris: Colin, 1919), 129–138.

However, in both cases, the actual work on the ground was the same, since the former Ottoman administrative borders had also neither been defined geographically nor had they been demarcated. The surveyors in the commission plotted a course through the landscape by using hilltops and brooks as identifiable landmarks; at times they had to negotiate with the local peasants who wanted to alter the border line according to the distribution of their fields.⁵²⁵

Together with the borders of the territory annexed to Serbia, its administration was also reshaped. Again, we see a mixture of Ottoman legacies and new developments that together defined the process of the integration into Serbia. Immediately after the occupation, Serbia installed a civilian administration in all areas under its military control, first under military supervision and later as part of the regular Serbian civil administration. Officials were sent from Belgrade to staff the key offices in the local administration. Ottoman districts were largely kept intact, and only smaller administrative units on the village level were combined. It was a first task of the new Serbian officials to conduct a census for introducing the Serbian tax system in the area. Initially, the New Areas did not form a regular part of the Serbian state: its inhabitants had only limited civil rights and their right to select their own local officials, which had been their prerogative since the Tanzimat reforms, was also restricted. This gave the Serbian government a range of political advantages, especially in confiscating property and steering the political process by hand-picking officials. Jelena Radovanović has characterised this regime as quasi-colonial, reflecting the attitude of the government in Belgrade that they bring civilisation to the areas in the south. Only in 1881 were most of the legal restrictions lifted.⁵²⁶

Within the process of integrating the New Areas, special attention was paid to the transfer of property and especially of *çiftliks* as the dominant and most contested form of property in arable land.⁵²⁷ Serbian politicians who had always supported the struggle of Christian sharecroppers against their Muslim landlords, particularly in Bosnia, wanted to make the peasants of the New Areas the owners of *çiftlik* land they cultivated. Therefore, immediately after the war, the Serbian authorities encouraged the peasants to stop all payments to their landlords.⁵²⁸ At

525 Nenad Stefanov, *Die Erfindung der Grenzen auf dem Balkan: Von einer spätosmanischen Region zu nationalstaatlichen Peripherien: Pirot und Caribrod 1856–1989* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 152–158.

526 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 82–104; Miroslav Svirčević, 'The Establishment of Serbian Local Government in the Counties of Niš, Vranje, Toplica and Pirot Subsequent to the Serbo-Turkish Wars of 1876–1878', *Balkanica* 37 (2006): 111–125.

527 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 143–189.

528 Ibid., 176.

the same time, the Serbian authorities had to honour the stipulations of the Berlin Treaty, which protected Muslim rights in the new Balkan states. The articles of the treaty concerning Serbia (35–42) included an anti-discrimination clause in favour of Muslims and devoted much attention to property rights of Muslim private individuals as well as Ottoman state property and pious foundations (*vakıf*). They were to be compensated for their losses in a way to be determined by a joint Serbian-Ottoman commission.

To steer the transition of ownership of *çiftlik* land and keep as much control as possible over the issue of compensation, in 1880 the Serbian government issued the Agrarian Law. Its primary goal was to prevent *çiftliks* from being sold on the free market; in this way, the government sought to ensure that the peasants would become the owners of the land they were cultivating. The Agrarian Law regulated the evaluation of *çiftlik* land and its eventual sale to the peasants as an internal Serbian process. *Çiftlik* owners who had not received any rents for two years had to put forward their claims within one year, and they were dependent on the Serbian authorities for the recognition of these claims and arbitration in case of disputes with the peasants. A year into the process and amidst severe criticism by the Muslim *çiftlik* owners who gained some support from the Great Powers, the Serbian government decided to pay off the landowners and later reclaim the money from its peasants. Therefore, the government took a loan from French and Austrian banks and by 1884 paid three million dinars to those landowners who did not boycott the proceedings. Protests by the Ottoman Empire to reconsider the whole process based on the Agrarian Law were not successful. The repayment from the peasants dragged on for decades; only in 1907 did the Serbian state issue an amnesty for the last outstanding payments.⁵²⁹

Parallel to these different policies to make the New Areas an integral part of Serbian state territory, the Serbian government was also confronted with the question of the population of the newly conquered lands. As has been already noted above, territory and population can be conceived of as two parallel political technologies, i.e. ways to produce governable entities of land and people by applying similar techniques.⁵³⁰ This can be seen in the already-mentioned census that was one of the first tasks of the Serbian civil administration in the New Areas. However, in the post-1878 Balkans, the issue of population took on a much more radical form concerning the question of refugees, expulsion and the right to return of hundreds of thousands of mostly Muslim, inhabitants of Southeast Europe.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 182–185.

⁵³⁰ Stuart Elden, 'How Should We Do the History of Territory?', *Territory, Politics, Governance* 1, no. 1 (2013): 5–20.

By 1877, the advance of the Russian and Serbian armies had already caused the majority of the Muslim inhabitants of the affected areas in Ottoman Europe to flee. Of the approximately eighty thousand Muslims living in the pre-war *sancak* of Niš, only six and a half thousand were still registered in the Serbian censuses of 1879; in the 1884 census, this number decreased again to approximately two thousand. Those affected were the Turkish populations in the cities of the region as well as the predominantly Albanian-speaking peasants in the rural south of the *sancak*.⁵³¹

Historians give a few often mutually exclusive explanations for the Muslim exodus. In their extremes, these range from the claim of a voluntary migration because Muslims did not want to live in the new Balkan states, to that of a forceful expulsion under the threat of imminent death. What follows will focus on the connection between the Muslim exodus and policies of population management and territory formation.

Initially, the many Muslims from the city of Niš and the other towns of the region left together with the Ottoman garrison as was sanctioned in the capitulation agreement. As the next section will show in greater detail, soon after the occupation, the Serbian army seems to have pressed the small remaining Muslim community in the city to emigrate as well. When dealing with the Albanian-speaking peasants living the south of the former *sancak* of Niš, army officials used a security argument. These peasants, who originally wanted to remain in their villages, were actively persecuted and expelled by the Serbian army. The majority of them settled in Kosovo and for years contested the territorial order.⁵³²

The common assumption shared by all parties, i.e. Serbia, the Great Powers and even the Ottoman Empire, was that the refugees would not and should not return home. Possibly, the history of the Serbian Principality as an exclusively Christian country from which its Muslim inhabitants had to move in several waves was the precedent and model. The more astonishing it is, then, that there was an approach from within the Serbian civilian administration to question the homogenisation of population, at least in theory. This was done in an attempt to make the New Areas economically viable when civilian officials took over the administration from the military. Negotiations, which also involved King Milan,

531 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 118–123; for an alternative calculation see Miloš Jagodić, 'The Emigration of Muslims from the New Serbian Regions 1877/1878', *Balkanologie* 2, no. 2 (1998).

532 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 127–132; for the larger context see Wolfgang Höpken, 'Flucht vor dem Kreuz? Muslimische Emigration aus Südosteuropa nach dem Ende der osmanischen Herrschaft (19./20. Jahrhundert)', *Comparativ*, no. 1 (1996).

were to allow some of the Muslim peasants to return and be re-settled in certain designated areas.⁵³³ It seems that because of mutual mistrust, on the whole, there were no or only very few returnees. Conversely, a scheme of the Serbian government to attract Serbian peasants from the Ottoman Empire to settle in the abandoned Muslim villages of the New Areas was also not overly successful. The resources the Serbian state could offer to them were not enough to attract many newcomers.⁵³⁴

Other economic measures were cementing the new population structure. For example, the *çiftlik* policy avoided outright confiscation of land owned by Muslims as had been demanded by nationalists. However, it also made it impossible for Muslim landowners to keep their land, so that the few of them remaining in Niš left after they had been paid off in 1884. And finally, as the next section will show, urban modernisation initiated by the new city administration resulted in massive discrimination against the few remaining Muslims that enticed most of them to leave the city for good.

7.2. De-Ottomanisation of the Cityscape

Four days after the capitulation of the Ottoman forces on 10 January 1878, the Ottoman commander together with his troops as well as the civil officials left Niš in the direction of Vranje to reach unoccupied Ottoman territory. One day later, King Milan entered Niš, being received by a deputation of its Muslim, Jewish and Christian inhabitants who thereby acted as an urban community for the last time. Although in the capitulation agreement it was stated that the property, honour and life of all the city's inhabitants would be respected, many Muslims preferred to leave their homes with or shortly after the Ottoman army.⁵³⁵ The Muslims of Niš followed the example of hundreds of thousands of Muslims who were fleeing Bulgaria from the advance of Russian troops. Their decision was informed by news about the hardship and persecution Muslims suffered at the hands of an army that had declared the war as a *reconquista*. Events were ominous, especially for those inhabitants of Niš who had emigrated from Serbia in the 1830s and 1860s and now were forced to look again for a new home.

Their fears were validated by the events in the weeks immediately after the Serbian occupation as well as the policies of the Serbian military in the following months. We have a relatively good picture of what happened in Niš

⁵³³ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 130–131.

⁵³⁴ Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 132–133.

⁵³⁵ A copy of the capitulation agreement to be found in the archive of the German Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt, AA) PA, R 13062.

because of the inquiry the British vice-consul Baker started in autumn 1879 about the events of the preceding year.⁵³⁶ He was charged by the British government as one of the guarantors of the Treaty of Berlin to examine the compensation of Muslim property owners. The vice-consul's report, which was probably informed by talks with local Muslims who had returned to Niš, can be complemented by information given in the reports of the Ottoman consul Nicolaides, who was appointed to the city around the same time as Baker. The reports allow us to get insight into the different phases in the process of the city's de-Ottomanisation as it was promoted by different actors with their own corresponding motives.

According to the British consul's report, the Muslim inhabitants of Niš sought refuge in the fortress after the capitulation of the Ottoman army as they had done earlier in moments of danger. Immediately, the local Christian population as well as the Serbian soldiers entering the city began to plunder the houses of Muslims in the left-bank city, destroying many of them particularly those on the banks of the river as well as those in the area of Arnavud Market. Some Muslims, e.g. the city's mufti, were mistreated and robbed of their personal belongings when the civilian population had to leave the fortress, which was handed over to the Serbian army. There were accusations that the Serbian general Belimarković misappropriated the movable property that some Muslims had managed to bring with them to the fortress. The army also proceeded with the demolition of houses in a more systematic manner to use them as firewood. Especially the quarter built in the south of the city by Midhat Pasha for the refugees from Belgrade was singled out for destruction.

According to the Ottoman consul's report, a group of up to 1,500 Albanians were among those Muslims who did not leave immediately with the Ottoman army but tried to hold out in Niš. When they repeatedly protested against the plundering of their houses, the Serbian army set them a deadline of ten days to leave the city, which they obeyed for fear of being shot.⁵³⁷ The army logistically supported expulsions on several occasions until summer 1878, possibly also in the case just described, by providing wagons and transporting the would-be migrants to the Ottoman border. Especially poor Muslims who had no means to relocate to the Ottoman Empire were targeted in this way.⁵³⁸

Besides the plundering and destruction of private houses, the first weeks of Serbian occupation of Niš was characterised by a de-Islamisation of the cityscape. The city's mosques were either used as magazines or demolished, 'apparently to destroy the Turkish character and appearance of the town', as the British

536 British National Archives (TNA), FO 195/1164, Baker to Gould, Niš, 20 September 1879.

537 HR.SYS. 1435/17, Nicolaides to Sermed Efendi, Niš, 16/28 October 1879.

538 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 129–131.

vice-consul judged in his report. The desacralisation and destruction of mosques that caused a radical transformation of the cityscape suggests a connection to similar acts of destruction that had occurred periodically in Niš as well as in other parts of the Balkans. After 1867, the mosques of Belgrade suffered a similar fate as did those in several Bulgarian cities in 1878. A parallel could even be drawn to more recent events during the war in Bosnia in the 1990s when mosques and churches were targeted by the different war parties. Likewise, houses of worship were violently attacked in 2004 when nationalist mobs set fire to Bajrakli Mosque in Belgrade and Islam Aga Mosque in Niš in retaliation for attacks on the Serbian minority in Kosovo and their churches and monasteries.⁵³⁹

Robert Hayden has suggested that these examples can be seen as the product of an underlying principle of multi-religious societies where different faiths always exist in a hierarchical relationship that was maintained by political power. Once the latter changes, the religious hierarchy also must be realigned, particularly by rearranging the urban religiouscape, i.e. by destroying religious buildings of the subordinated religion or converting them to the dominant faith.⁵⁴⁰

As another pertinent example for this pattern, Fethiye Mosque, the mosque that had become the nucleus of the quarter for the refugees from Belgrade in the 1860s, must be mentioned here. The well-remembered fact that the mosque had been a church until 1737 made its reconversion a logical step in the eyes of all inhabitants in 1878. Judging from a story related about this conversion, the local Muslim community also accepted this logic. Asked to hand over the mosque the *kadi*, the hodjas as well as the Muslim notables answered with resignation: 'We know it from experience, to whom God gives power over Niš he also gives this house for his religion. So take it.'⁵⁴¹ After its consecration as St. Nicholas, the minaret of the mosque was torn down and substituted by an improvised bell tower. Not much of the original building is left today because in the 1920s, the church was totally overhauled and among other parts two towers and choirs were added.

539 Marija Mandić, 'Unifying the Other: The Case of the March Violence in Kosovo and the Mosque Burning in Belgrade', in *Cultures of Crisis in Southeast Europe. Part 1, Crises Related to Migration, Transformation, Politics, Religion, and Labour*, ed. Klaus Roth and Asker Kartari, *Ethnologia Balkanica*, volume 18/2015 (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2016), 281–305.

540 Robert M Hayden, 'Intersecting Religioscapes in Post-Ottoman Spaces: Trajectories Of Change, Competition And Sharing Of Religious Spaces', in *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict*, ed. Rebecca Bryant (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 59–85; Robert M Hayden, 'Religious Structures and Political Dominance in Belgrade', *Ethnologia Balkanica*, no. 09 (2005): 213–224.

541 Felix Kanitz, *Das Königreich Serbien und das Serbenvolk von der Römerzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Meyer, 1909), 2:164; the story is originally recorded by Milan Đakov Miličević, *Kraljevina Srbija* (Belgrade: Sloboda, 1973), 105, first ed. 1884.

The previous chapter has argued that during the nineteenth century the Ottoman government, for political reasons, tried to flatten the religious hierarchy and decouple it to a certain extent from political power. This political strategy became very visible in the new churches the Ottomans allowed to be built all over Southeast Europe. On the whole, this policy did not seem to have altered by much the understanding of the local actors of the religious hierarchy. However, Felix Kanitz, who related the above story, mused that the remembrance of Midhat Pasha's tolerant regime was the reason why the Muslims of Niš were asked at all to give up Fethiye Mosque, although the answer was clear from the beginning.

After the initial destruction due to plundering as well as the symbolic rearrangement of the religiouscape, de-Ottomanisation proceeded in a more systematic fashion, as vice-consul Baker's report shows. Soon after the occupation, Serbian authorities formed a commission consisting of a special engineer, the engineers of the province of the district, the prefect of Niš as well as three members of the municipality to work out a plan for the systematic transformation and modernisation of the city. As a first step, in spring 1878 the commission issued a map that must be considered a very important source regarding the urban development of Niš because it shows the city's Ottoman morphology at a time when it was on the verge of vanishing.⁵⁴²

On the basis of this map, King Milan commissioned the Austrian engineer Franz Winter to elaborate an urban development plan. The principal document of Winter's 'Project for the Regulation of the City of Niš' was a second map dated August 1878 that presents Winter's vision of the future city superimposed on the earlier map in red ink.⁵⁴³ The principal goal of the project was to make the city look more European by widening and straightening existing streets and forcing them into an orthogonal grid. To facilitate traffic, Winter proposed two new bridges connecting both sides of the river. He also envisioned several public squares and marketplaces as well as parks to break up the urban fabric. Additionally, he added important new public buildings such as a grammar school (gymnasium), a middle

542 A copy of the map can be found in OeStA, KA KPS KS G I b, 169-3 (see figure 6.3.). The map is signed with the name Feliks Daljaković, who is possibly identical with Felix Waiter, an American volunteer in the Serbian army. See Vladimir Stojančević, 'Jedan Amerikanac, Srpski Dobrovoljac U Ratu Srbije Sa Turskom 1877/78. Godine', *Istorijskog Museja Srbije* 23 (1986): 93–96. Alternatively, Felix Kanitz reports that in the 1890s the city engineer of Požarevac was one Mr. Weitmann from Germany. He had changed his name to Daleković, i.e. the one who came from far away. See Kanitz, *Königreich Serbien*, 1:167.

543 The original of Winter's map is kept in the National Museum of Niš. A reproduction is published in *Niški Leksikon*, 'Projekat za regulaciju varoši Niša iz 1878', 413–414; a redrawn version in Branko Maksimović, *Idejni Razvoj Srpskog Urbanizma Period Rekonstrukcije Gradova Do 1914* (Belgrade: Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti, 1978), 77.

school, a telegraph and post office as well as barracks. For all the radical changes the plan proposed, overall, it remained true to the morphology of the existing city. Winter kept the principal axes of traffic and also stuck to the existing limits of the city because evidently, there was no urgent need for an extension given the fact that about one third of its inhabitants had left. The most radical departure from the existing morphology was that the fortress area was totally left out of the plan. At this early stage of Serbian Niš, the fortress was already not an organic part of the city any longer because it was occupied by the military.⁵⁴⁴

The Niš regulation plan can be related to the idea of urban modernisation as it was developed in the Southeast European states that gained autonomy and independence from the Ottoman Empire. The 1830s Athens as the new capital of independent Greece, Bucharest as the capital of autonomous Walachia and Belgrade as the political centre of autonomous Serbia were subjected to a process of urban transformation whose general aim was modernising and de-Ottomanising these cities. After 1878, Sofia, as the new capital of Bulgaria, as well as other Bulgarian cities followed suit. Urban planners educated in Europe proposed technical as well as administrative solutions to problems of traffic and transportation, fire, hygiene and security. At the same time, the cities were to express the rupture with the Ottoman Empire, which was perceived as backward. Urban planning and architecture as it was expressed in new government buildings, museums and theatres was also understood as a vital part of constructing a new national identity.⁵⁴⁵

It is worthwhile to dwell in more detail on Serbia because it was the immediate example for the transformation of Niš. Soon after the formal recognition of Serbian autonomy in 1830/33, the Serbian authorities started a policy of urban transformation in the part of Belgrade they controlled according the dual administration of the city. To increase tax revenue, the urban population and their property were registered and the bureaucracy began to intrude into urban social and economic life. In 1842 Franz Janke, Vienna-educated chief municipal engineer since 1834, proposed the first urban extension that created a new quarter arranged in regular plots aligned along an orthogonal grid of streets. Especially European travellers and increasingly also the Serbian elite began to perceive these attempts to

544 Jovan Ćirić, 'Urbani Razvoj Niša', in *Istorija Niša*, ed. by Danica Milić (Niš: Grandina i Prosveta, 1984), 2:196–198.

545 Alexandra Yerolympos, 'A New City for a New State: City Planning and the Formation of National Identity in the Balkans (1820s–1920s)', *Planning Perspectives* 8, no. 3 (1993): 233–257; Tanja Damjanović Conley and Emily Gunzburger Makaš, 'Shaping Central and Southeastern European Capital Cities in the Age of Nationalism', in *Capital Cities in the Aftermath of Empires: Planning in Central and Southeastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1–28.

technically modernise and administratively control Belgrade in orientalist terms. They juxtaposed an urban modernity that was defined as Serbian and Christian against the decay that in their eyes prevailed in the part of Belgrade still under Ottoman control. The technical and ideological side of modernisation merged in the person of Emilijan Josimović (1823–1897), Vienna-educated engineer and professor at the Belgrade Gymnasium. In 1867 when the Ottomans had to retreat from Belgrade, the former Ottoman part of the city was transformed according to Josimović's plan. It proposed the regulation of the irregular street grid with its many cul-de-sacs to ease traffic, it foresaw parks and open places to ensure the circulation of air, and it planned for sewers and water pipes to increase hygiene.⁵⁴⁶

Just like Josimović's, Winter's regulation plan for Niš also stood in the tradition of city planning of the European enlightenment. European capitals were the point of reference of planning. Both planners, who had been educated as engineers in Vienna, proposed technical solutions for various urban problems; however, both cases also displayed the basic contradiction of this form of planning. Although it could show a certain sensibility to existing city structures and morphologies, their vision of the future could not be implemented without massively infringing on the rights and preferences of the actual urban residents. Therefore, this form of planning became a necessary accomplice of centralisation of power and led to the exclusion of many city dwellers.

This is most evident in the case of of Niš and other cities of the New Areas, where the exodus of the Muslim population became a precondition for the city regulation and was actively used by the authorities to put further pressure on the remaining Muslims. Moreover, local Christian urban society was also negatively affected, which stresses the character of the regulation as a quasi-colonial imposition from outside. As Vice-consul Baker's report observes, in Niš the three municipal members of the planning commission apparently rejected Winter's plan because it would have resulted in an almost complete reconstruction of the city. Their objections were disregarded, and the authorities gave Winter executive powers to implement the plan. On top of the suspension of normal planning procedures, property rights were also violated on a massive scale. All houses that stood in the way of the newly planned streets were declared unsafe and demolished so that the empty plots could be expropriated more easily. This procedure was systematically applied to Muslim and Jewish houses that were sold as building material

⁵⁴⁶ Miloš Jovanović, "The City in Our Hands": Urban Management and Contested Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Belgrade', *Urban History* 40, no. 01 (2013): 32–50; Ljiljana Blagojević, 'Urban Regularisation of Belgrade, 1867: Trace vs. Erasure', *Serbian Architectural Journal* 1, no. 1 (2009): 27–44.

after demolition, before seizing the building plots on which they were located. In many cases, even the foundations of houses and boundaries of plots were erased in order to make it more difficult for the absent owner to claim compensation. The Ottoman consul confirms this practice of expropriation under the pretext of the common good that left the owners with no or only very little compensation.⁵⁴⁷

As Baker's report claims, many Christian inhabitants also had to resort to bribes to have the regulation plan altered in order to save their houses. Another example of how the regulation plan was used for ideological purposes concerned the local bishop. Because he was 'obnoxious' to the local authorities, his *konak* was demolished. This seems to have been the late revenge of the Serbian party against the bishop, who had been nominated by the Bulgarian Exarchate.

According to Vice-consul Baker, the responsibility for using the regulation plan in a systematic manner against urban local society lay with Kosta Pavlović, the prefect of Niš, and to a lesser degree, also with Winter himself. It is not clear whether the allegations in the report that both of them systematically enriched themselves in their positions are true. At the very least, such allegations seem to indicate that there was a tension between the officials brought in by the central government to the New Areas such as Pavlović, who was the last prefect nominated directly by the army, and the officials of the municipality, who were locals already in office before the Serbian takeover. Only in 1881 were the newly acquired districts fully integrated into the Serbian administration.⁵⁴⁸

The architecture of Ottoman Niš vanished quickly as a result of the three different phases of de-Ottomanisation described above: the spontaneous plundering and destruction of private, mostly Muslim-owned houses, the realignment of religious hierarchy resulting in the destruction or conversion of almost all mosques, and finally the planned urban modernisation on behalf of the Serbian authorities. Like no other observer, the Austrian geographer and travel writer Felix Kanitz was able to assess this transformation that Niš witnessed. Kanitz had already been a frequent visitor to Ottoman Niš (in 1860, 1864 and 1870), before he returned to the city again, first in 1887 and possibly also on later occasions.⁵⁴⁹

His account should be read as a continuation of those of the Serbian officials and intellectuals who travelled to New Serbia immediately after the conquest and

⁵⁴⁷ HR.SYS. 1435/12, Nicolaides to Sermed Efendi, Niš, 12/24 September 1879.

⁵⁴⁸ Miroslav Svirčević, 'The Establishment of Serbian Local Government', 111–125.

⁵⁴⁹ Kanitz, *Königreich Serbien*, 2:154–170. The second volume of the work was published in 1909, five years after Kanitz's death.

brought back home the first impressions of this unknown continent.⁵⁵⁰ Kanitz certainly knew their accounts and incorporated information from them into his work. But while these early observers from Serbia were usually disappointed with what they found in the South – especially that their ‘liberated’ brethren were lacking in patriotic spirit – Kanitz’s later account seeks to portray the Kingdom of Serbia as a modern, culturally and economically burgeoning nation and therefore stresses the development the city had undertaken since Ottoman times. This starts from his arrival by train from Belgrade and continues on the coach ride to the Hôtel Europe in the city centre. He observes the cultural change in street life, which was less diverse and Oriental than before, but had taken on a more European character with Serbian officials from the north and more women appearing in public. This scenery unfolds on the backdrop of new European houses and streets and gas lighting as well as new shops with new merchandise. Kanitz describes this as the positive results of an ‘urban regulation in a Czarist manner’, an expression that seems to imply that it was implemented in an abrupt and absolutist way. He also mentions the conflicts of such a regulation with the interests of private homeowners. But in contrast to the British vice-consul, he takes the side of the authorities, dismissing protests as unjustified or motivated by the wish to drive up the compensation.

In Kanitz’s picture of modern Niš, traces from Ottoman times are hardly mentioned. Only a few ‘Turkish dandies’ populate the cafés where they are waiting to collect rents or manage the sale of their former *çiftlik*s. We will examine the Muslim life of post-Ottoman Niš, still existing but largely invisible to Kanitz, in the last section of this chapter. As the only functioning Ottoman urban institution, Kanitz mentions a large Turkish bath with a section for men and women as well as a mikveh and a new reception hall added in 1888. It was owned by Şükriye Hanım, the rich landowner we encountered in the last chapter, who drew a yearly rent of 200 ducats from it. The *hamam* located on present-day Sindelić Square in the east of the left bank city continued to work under a Serbian owner until 1941, when it was destroyed in a German air raid on the city.⁵⁵¹

As another Ottoman legacy, briefly, Kanitz also acknowledges Midhat’s infrastructural contributions because they continued to work for a while, e.g. the ‘friendly but unsolid’ post office that was just being replaced when Kanitz came to

550 Jelena Radovanović, ‘Can There Be a “Civilized Turk”? Encountering Ottoman Modernity in Post-1878 Niš’, *Südost-Forschungen* 78, no. 1 (2019); Nenad Stefanov, ‘Bildungsgeschichten in Serbien: Zwischen Volksaufklärung und Mythologisierung der Nation’, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas*, no. 4 (2002).

551 Kanitz, *Königreich Serbien*, 2:156; ‘Hamami’, *Niški Leksikon*, 557.

Niš. 'Thus, all works created by Midhat's energy, except for his excellent roads, are gradually demolished by the spade.'⁵⁵²

Another material remnant from Ottoman times that Kanitz uses to contrast Ottoman to Serbian Niš is Hafiz Pasha's *konak*. He claims that when the Serbian army took Niš, the *konak* owned by Hafiz's grandson Bekir was half in ruins and only was saved because King Milan bought it from Bekir's son Mustafa. Kanitz, who seems to have visited the palace, speaks in favour of the king's restoration and particularly appreciates the mixture of oriental and western furniture and the decorations the queen chose to make the place more homely.

With Hafiz Pasha's *konak* and the fortress, the Serbian state had symbolically occupied the two principal locations where power was concentrated in Ottoman Niš. The fortress, as a military and administrative hub, was the base of the central government in the city; Hafiz Pasha's *konak* was the centre of the local elite. While both places remained legible as formerly Ottoman structures, at the same time, they were integrated into a new system of state symbolism and adapted to new aesthetics of power.

Yet the Serbian state also created its own location of power in the immediate vicinity of the Ottoman centre. At the banks of the Nišava on the south-eastern flank of the fortress, the new monumental government palace of the Niš district (*okrug*) was opened in 1889. The huge complex of offices still dominates the waterfront of the Nišava downstream from the bridge today. It was probably put very consciously at this place at the centre of the city. At the same time, it was located at the edge of the Belgrad Quarter, where 'you can see the whitewashed houses of the remaining poorest Turkish families', as Kanitz remarked. 'Soon they will pick up the walking stick and then the hodja will lock the door of the last remaining unassuming mosque where Allah's power and justice was praised in Niš.'⁵⁵³

Kanitz' slightly kitschy reference attests to the precarious nature of the last remnants of Muslim life in Serbian Niš. His prediction was wrong, though: the door of the last mosque has never been locked for good to this day, although the Muslim community changed quite considerably in the decades following the incorporation of Niš into Serbia. The next section will delineate this change and show how the political, economic and urbanistic dynamics described earlier imprinted on the Muslims of Niš and shaped their options and life itineraries.

⁵⁵² Kanitz, *Königreich Serbien*, 2:158.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 2:161.

7.3 The Last Ottomans of Niš

We cannot be certain why the Belgrad Quarter became the base of Muslim life in Niš after the Serbian occupation. Possibly, the reason was that the mosque of the quarter survived the initial acts of destruction before it was confiscated by the Serbian authorities together with other religious buildings such as sufi convents and schools. In contrast to private property and *çiftlik* land, the Serbian state never paid any compensation to the Ottoman Empire for these buildings and the property of pious foundations (*vakıf*) that were financing the upkeep of mosques. In theory, the question of compensation was regulated in the Berlin Treaty, but negotiations between the Ottoman and Serbian side dragged on for over a decade before they were adjourned without any result.⁵⁵⁴

The Muslims who remained in the towns of the New Areas usually were granted one mosque to keep up religious life, but the Serbian authorities reduced the assets of their *vakıfs* as they saw fit.⁵⁵⁵ In the case of Niš, the mosque of the Belgrad Quarter was chosen, although the similarly intact Islam Aga Mosque would also have been an option. Perhaps Islam Aga's location was too central and therefore not suitable to express the reversed hierarchy of Islam and Christianity in the city. Only after the destruction of the Belgrad Quarter mosque in the Second World War would Islam Aga Mosque become the centre of the Muslim community that it is today. In Yugoslavia, the mosque was also known as Adrević or Hadrović Mosque, probably after a new donor.⁵⁵⁶

In addition to the mosque, the Muslims of Niš also kept a school for basic religious education, which after some years was supported by the Serbian state. On his 1882 visit to Niš, the Serbian minister of education, Stojan Novaković, was touched by the poor material conditions he found in the school and ordered it to be renovated and the teachers' salaries to be augmented. The remaining *vakıf* of the mosque had been insufficient for these quite basic tasks.⁵⁵⁷ It is unclear if the teachers were already fully paid by the Serbian state at this point. This was the situation around the turn of the nineteenth century when there were several state-employed Islamic functionaries in Niš.⁵⁵⁸

The patronage by the Serbian state seems to have followed the example of the Bajrakli Mosque in Belgrade, which after 1867 was put under the protection of

⁵⁵⁴ Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 203–220.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 201–202.

⁵⁵⁶ Ivan Zdravković, *Izbor građe za proučavanje spomenika islamske arhitekture u Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Jugoslavenski Institut za zaštitu spomenika kulture 1964), 27–31.

⁵⁵⁷ HR.SYS. 1416/66, Nicolaides to Said Pasha, Niš, 30 November 1882.

⁵⁵⁸ Kanitz, *Königreich Serbien*, 3:649.

the Serbian government and also paid the salary of one hodja and one muezzin. In the war of 1876, the mosque was closed, and it only reopened in 1893/94 under the patronage of the king.⁵⁵⁹

It is ironic that, while the Islamic institutions were integrated into the new national order – admittedly, hesitantly and insufficiently – the Muslims who still resided in Niš with a few exceptions remained Ottoman citizens. Only a handful of individuals welcomed the Serbian annexation and were rewarded with official positions and citizenship. The most prominent example was a certain Yakub Agha, who was accused by the Ottoman consul of exploiting his position in the Serbian tax commission to buy undervalued property from his fellow Muslims. Under the name Jakub Mustafić in 1880, he was nominated by the Serbian government as a representative for the New Areas in parliament.⁵⁶⁰

The vast majority of Muslims staying in Niš in the first decade after the Serbian acquisition were those former inhabitants who temporarily returned to take care of personal affairs and sell the property they had left behind. Some of them also acted as representatives for those who preferred to stay in the Ottoman Empire. Very soon after the peace settlement Ottoman citizens already began to ask for visas.⁵⁶¹ In principle, the Serbian government could not deny them entry because it was bound by the Berlin Treaty and dependent on the European Powers. An episode in autumn 1879, however, shows that initially, even the temporary returnees were not always welcomed by the Serbian authorities. The city prefect threatened to expel 25 Ottoman citizens, some with their families, under the pretext that they had either not paid their taxes or that they had returned without visas or were too poor to support themselves. Although it seems that the decision was never implemented, possibly due to the intervention of the British consul in Niš, the governor's action is a reminder that even within limited boundaries, Muslim presence was still precarious.⁵⁶²

The Ottoman consul judged that the question of urban property lay at the heart of the discriminatory practices against the Muslims. He contrasts their situation with that of the Roma of Niš, who were left alone by the local authorities, although most of them were also Muslims. Because the Roma did not possess

559 Robert M. Hayden, 'Religious Structures and Political Dominance in Belgrade', *Ethnologia Balkanica*, no. 9 (2005): 213–214.

560 HR.SYS. 1435/12, Nicolaides to Sermed Efendi, Niš, 12/24 September 1879; Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 136.

561 HR.SYS. 1407/31, Kosovo governor Mehmed Nazif to Grand Vizierate, 7 Zilkade 1295 (2 November 1878).

562 HR.SYS. 1416/19, Baker, Niš, 15 October 1879 and Nicolaides to Sermed Efendi, Niš, 8/20 October 1879.

houses in the city, there was little occasion for conflict with the Serbian authorities. It seems that the Roma even became a source of income for the municipality because they were given abandoned Muslim houses as tenants of the city.⁵⁶³

While the consul's report stresses the economic aspect as a reason for this differentiated treatment, the significance of urban property must be judged from a more general perspective. The question 'To whom does the city belong?' can be taken quite literally here as referring to the possession of real estate and plots of land in the city. In the immediate post-war situation, the Serbian authorities seemed to have been quite fixated on equating property with power, to the degree that they were even reluctant to honour property rights from the Ottoman period. They wanted immediate and full control of the city, although it was clear that most Muslims would only return to Niš temporarily to manage the transition.

The Roma did not figure into this scenario and therefore seemed to have faced few problems, although the Muslims among them should have been suspicious to the Serbian authorities, too. Additionally, it is possible that like many other Roma groups in the region, the Roma of Niš were Serbian-speaking and therefore were treated differently from the Turkish- and Albanian-speaking Muslims.⁵⁶⁴ Because of this attitude, around 1,900, ca. 90 per cent of the 2,000 Muslims living in Niš, were Roma.⁵⁶⁵

Regarding urban property, the Jews of Niš found themselves in a similar situation to that of the Muslims. So, it comes as no surprise that their houses were subjected to the same wave of destruction as those of their Muslim neighbours in the first weeks after the Serbian takeover. Moreover, some scholars claim that the Jewish community was subjected to antisemitic attacks and discrimination. For example, for a time, Jewish butchers were prevented from producing kosher meat, the market day was moved to Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath, and reportedly, in November 1878, the Jewish cemetery was desecrated and corpses dug up. However, it seems that these attacks stopped quite quickly, even before the Jews in Serbia were awarded full citizenship in 1884. This is probably the explanation of why the Jewish population did not change radically in the transition from Ottoman to Serbian rule. It decreased slightly from ca. 1,000 to 800 individuals, but the Jewish community never followed the exodus of the Muslims.⁵⁶⁶

From among the temporary Ottoman returnees to Niš, the group of big land-owners was the most visible because they actively promoted their property claims.

563 HR.SYS. 1435/18, Nicolaides to Sermed Efendi, Niš, 18/30 October 1879.

564 Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 208.

565 Kanitz, *Königreich Serbien*, 3:649.

566 Ženi Lebl, *Do "Konačnog Rešenja": Jevreji u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2002), 68, 77–78; Kanitz, *Königreich Serbien*, 3:648.

When in summer 1880 the Serbian government issued the Agrarian Law regulating the compensation for *çiftlik* land, this group addressed a petition to the Ottoman representative of the mixed committee in Niš that was to examine property claims. The 31 seals imprinted at the bottom of the petition show that quite a large number of landowners were still present on the spot. Apparently, some of them had authorised agents to represent their cases, as family names show, e.g. İslamağazade, Bekirbeyzade and others that are illegible, which were added to some of the seals. This was to indicate which families the signatories of the petition were representing.⁵⁶⁷

Managing the property cases of others was a business for quite a few of those Ottoman Muslims who stayed in Niš. Over the years, these agents became the dominant group when more cases were settled and property owners moved back to the Ottoman Empire, as happened especially often in 1884 when the *çiftlik* owners were paid off. In an 1890 report the Ottoman consul in Niš claims that almost all of the 80 to 100 Ottoman subjects residing in the city offered their services as agents to promote property claims for their fellow nationals. The consul is very critical of these agents, describing them as a kind of mafia who take advantage of their clients and damage the Ottoman reputation abroad.⁵⁶⁸

While private property was their *raison d'être*, on occasions the Muslims in Niš would act as a religious and a national community. One example was the holiday at the end of Ramadan celebrated at the beginning of September 1880. The report of the Ottoman consul particularly highlights the official elements of the festivities, e.g. the noon prayer in honour of the sultan, the reception of the imam, the mufti, the hodjas together with ca. 200 Muslims at the Ottoman consulate, the official visits of the consul to the houses of the local notables and an evening garden party with music at the house of the Ottoman delegate of the mixed property commission. The Serbian authorities also paid visits to the Ottoman representatives on the occasion of the end of Ramadan. The consul concludes his report with the following remark:

The Muslim population, who was very satisfied to see that their holiday was celebrated with such an unlimited freedom in public and in a foreign country, did praise my course of action under these circumstances and left by thanking me and wishing me well and finally addressing their sincere

567 HR.SYS. 1454/9, Niš devlet-i aliye komiserliği canib-i alisine, Eylül 1296 (September 1880).

568 HR.H... 53/9, Henri to Said Pasha, Niš, 10/22 May 1890.

prayers to God for the long, happy and prosperous life of H.M. the Sultan, Our August and Souverain Benefactor.⁵⁶⁹

Clearly, the consul wanted to highlight his valuable service to the Ottoman subjects in town as well as his good working relationship with the Serbian authorities, which was very different from the tensions of the previous two years. The transition from the military administration to a regular civilian one that ultimately made the district of Niš a regular part of Serbian territory seemed to have relaxed the situation considerably.

These good relations endured in the following years. E.g. in his report for 1884, the Ottoman consul speaks of the good harmony between Muslims and Serbs in the city, adding that there were also no attacks on Jews. As proof of this atmosphere, he remarks that the local Serbs continued to speak Turkish as the traditional language of communication with the remaining Muslims rather than insisting on Serbian as the new national language. The recent settlement of the *çiftlik* question had possibly contributed to this relaxed attitude, although the return of the rich Muslim landowners to the Ottoman Empire, in the consul's interpretation, had triggered an economic recession.⁵⁷⁰

Seen from the official perspective of the consul, the festivities at the end of Ramadan took place 'in a foreign country'. We can assume that the small Muslim community of temporary returnees felt very different about this. However, we do not have any individual testimonies about their personal connection to their home city, which they would soon leave for good. Only one unusual account by the Serbian writer Jelena Dimitrijević (1862–1945)⁵⁷¹ is an exception to this silence. This account gives valuable insight into the personal dimension of Muslim life in Niš immediately after the war. As a young woman, Dimitrijević accompanied her husband who was stationed as a military officer in Niš, where she became friends with several Muslim families. She took part in their family life, among others things, in the preparations for a wedding in the family of Bekir Bey. Her life experience in Niš sparked her interest in Muslim culture in general and especially in the situation of Muslim women; later she started to learn Turkish and became acquainted with the writer Fatma Aliye (1862–1936), the daughter of the historian Cevdet Pasha, whom we have cited on several occasions.

569 HR.SYS. 1489/38, Nicolaides to Sermed Efendi, Niš, 29 August/10 September 1880; translated from the French original by the author.

570 HR.SYS. 1417/17, Nicolaides to Arifi Pasha, Niš, 12/24 April 1884.

571 Celia Hawkesworth, 'A Serbian Woman in a Turkish Harem: The Work of Jelena Dimitrijević (1862–1945)', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 1999, 56–73.

Radovanović, who analyses Jelena Dimitrijević's work in detail, credits her as the most original from among the late-nineteenth century Serbian authors who described the new parts of Serbia to an audience in the north. While in general these descriptions also serve as a foil for Serbian society and its relationship to modernisation, in Dimitrijević's case, this is saturated by her personal interaction with the Muslims as representatives of the Ottoman past.⁵⁷²

Dimitrijević published her account of her life in Niš in 1897 as *Pisma iz Niša o haremima* (*Letters from Niš about Harems*). The first-hand observations on Muslim family life, Turkish customs, material culture and folklore on which the book is based probably took place in the early 1880s. In her account, Dimitrijević gives much attention to her Muslim friends, who are characterised by the local customs and the particular Turkish dialect spoken in Niš. While the book never explicitly discusses the political side of Muslim migration from Niš, on many occasions, the women protagonists thematise it from a personal perspective. They remember friends who have already left, express sorrow about their own future and sometimes are nostalgic about their hometown as it had been in the past:

We are few now; in the old days, the hamam and the weddings in Niš were a different story; in no place in the world could you find harems more joyful than in Niš. Oh, that is how it used to be, and now... Oldi, bitti (it happened, it ended). There is nothing left, neither our customs, nor our pure hakk-din (true faith). She followed her last words with a heavy sigh and a bitter tear, and then composed herself and whispered: This is how it was written.⁵⁷³

The formula of *oldu bitti* uttered by Dimitrijević's friend certainly was full of nostalgia for a lost world. But perhaps it can also be understood as pragmatism in light of the necessity to start a new life elsewhere. During the advance of the Serbian army in winter 1877/78, the Muslim population of the *sancak* of Niš mostly fled south to Kosovo, where the refugees were housed in emergency quarters such as mosques and khans, but also in private homes. Figures vary, but according to some scholars, the Ottoman Province of Kosovo counted up to 60,000 refugees in the years after the war. Many of them, especially the Albanian-speaking peasant population, settled there permanently; other refugees moved elsewhere.⁵⁷⁴

572 Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 137–140 and ead., 'Civilised Turk', 107–116.

573 Quoted after Radovanović, 'Contested Legacy', 139, who gives more examples.

574 Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 228–229; Eva Frantz, *Gewalt und Koexistenz: Muslime und Christen im spätosmanischen Kosovo (1870–1913)* (München: Oldenbourg, 2016), 348–353.

Richer and more important refugees from Niš such as the Bekirbeyzade family or the sheikh of the Bali Tekke, a lodge of the Sadiye sufi order that was located in the Belgrad Quarter,⁵⁷⁵ emigrated to Istanbul; others found a new home in Macedonia. A group of 15 former residents of Niš then living in Bitola (Ott. Manastır) inquired with the Ottoman authorities about what happened to the houses they owned inside the fortress of Niš.⁵⁷⁶ Another large group of over 20 *çiflik* owners in the former *sancak* of Niš wrote from Salonica to protest the Serbian Agrarian Law.⁵⁷⁷

Since the eighteenth century, Muslim refugees like those fleeing from the *sancak* of Niš were called *muhacirs* (sg. *muhacir*, pl. *muhacirin*). There was a general consensus in Ottoman society that the state had to give them shelter, provide food and other assistance and ultimately resettle them on its territory. While local authorities had previously taken care of this, after the Crimean War, a central commission was founded to deal with the Tatar refugees and the succeeding waves, most importantly those after the war of 1877/78 and the Balkan Wars 1912/13.⁵⁷⁸

The *muhacirs* originating from Niš were but a small fraction of the thousands of Muslims who fled to Ottoman territory during and after the war of 1877/78. In the official statistics and probably also in the public perception, the refugees from Niš were regarded as a part of the Rumelian Turks from Bulgaria. In 1881 there were 39,000 of them registered in the Ottoman Empire as refugees. According to separate local statistics, almost 26,000 Bulgarian Turks were waiting for their permanent settlement in Istanbul and 21,000 in the province of Salonica.⁵⁷⁹

The refugees from Bulgaria were joined by other groups from Ottoman Europe, e.g. Bosnians as well as Muslims from the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia, which had been an additional theatre of war. Some of them became refugees for a second time, such as the Circassian communities who had fled from the northern Caucasus in the 1860s and had been settled in Rumelia and also in rural areas of the *sancak* of Niš. Those Muslims of Belgrade for whom Midhat Pasha had constructed the new quarter in Niš also had to move a second time.

575 BOA, HR.H... 49/10, Hariciye Nezaret-i Celilesine, Kanunievvel 1296 (December 1880).

576 HR.SYS. 1407/40, 10 Teşrinisani 1295 (22 November 1879).

577 They addressed their petitions directly at the Great Powers, e.g. the German ambassador in Istanbul: AA, PA, R 13061, A Son Excellence le Ministre de Prussie, Saloniki, 29 July 1880.

578 Abdullah Saydam, 'Muhacir', *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. Ek-2, 286–288; P.A. Andrews, 'Muhadjir: 2. In Turkey and the Ottoman Lands', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition online.

579 Derya Derin Paşaoğlu, 'Muhacir Komisyonu Maruzatı'na Göre (1877–78) 93 Harbi Sonrası Muhacir İşkânı', *History Studies* 5, no. 2 (2013): 360, 365–366.

In general, scholars have recognised the *muhacirs*' huge impact on the transformation of Ottoman state and society, especially from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards. Demographically, Muslim migrants raised the proportion of the Muslim population of the empire to about 80 per cent. This was one of the incentives for Sultan Abdülhamid II (reg. 1876–1909) to highlight religious symbols and merge Islamic with political agendas during his reign.⁵⁸⁰ Migration also boosted the Ottoman economy and here, in particular, the agricultural sector. Because the refugees from the Balkans came from the most developed part of the empire, they gave new economic energy to the areas where they resettled. As commercial farmers and small merchants with a strong interest in material progress and modern education, the elite from among them added to a growing new Ottoman middle class of Muslims that was forming during the Hamidian period.⁵⁸¹

A more detailed look at the refugees from Niš, which unfortunately this study cannot provide, would be highly welcome to substantiate this very general outline of the economic integration of the 1878 *muhacirs*. While many lost everything, especially the landed elite of Niš were affluent enough to start a new life in the Ottoman Empire. After some years, those *çiflik* owners who accepted the Serbian offer of compensation even gained some capital. Some of them may have reinvested this capital in commercial farming, especially in the context of Macedonia where many of them lived.

For other refugees from Niš, receiving compensation for their lost property remained a dream they kept chasing after. The latest of the numerous inquiries and petitions regarding such claims that are preserved in the Turkish archives dates from 1924. A certain Mustafa Rasım petitioned the Foreign Office of the Republic of Turkey in Ankara about the compensation of 4,000 Francs for a house in Hünkar Quarter inside the fortress of Niš. In turn, Ankara asked its branch in the old capital, a special organisation called the Istanbul Delegation (İstanbul Murahhaslığı), to provide the necessary documentation from the archive of the Ottoman foreign ministry.⁵⁸²

Since Mustafa Rasım's original petition is not preserved, we have no information about the petitioner, the house in question, or why the compensation had not been paid – if the claim was genuine at all and not just a story that the petitioner had heard as a child at the dinner table. Owners of private houses in Niš that

580 Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 183–187.

581 Ibid., 97–98.

582 HR.İM.. 112/10, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hariciye Vekaleti to İstanbul Murahhaslığı, 3 Augustos 1340 (3 August 1924).

had been destroyed or expropriated by the Serbian authorities not receiving their rightful compensation was a common phenomenon. We have a handful of cases from the late 1880s and early 1890s in which claimants addressed the Ottoman government asking for assistance to deal with the Serbian authorities.⁵⁸³ Mustafa Rasim's request stands out because it comes almost half a century after the destruction of the house in Hünkâr Quarter. It almost seems as if he wanted to make sure that the Republic of Turkey did not forget about its Ottoman legacy, on which his compensation claim rested.

Refugees and their descendants like Mustafa Rasim or his family were at the centre of the transformation of late Ottoman society, politics and culture on which the Republic of Turkey was founded. Turkish nationalism as an ideology as well as the Turkish nation as a group of people with a special identity grew within the migration society of the late Ottoman Empire, which successfully integrated Muslim migrants from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. While migrants initially gained access to Ottoman society because they were Muslims, according to Karpát, from the 1880s, a concept of Turkishness began to emerge, integrating the different migrant groups and indigenous Ottoman communities in this migration society. The emerging Turkish identity did not totally erase the differences in language, customs, etc. of the various Muslim communities, but acted as an umbrella for all the different groups.⁵⁸⁴

The Turkish-speaking Muslims of Rumelia, whether refugees or not, played a special role in the formation of Turkish nationalism after 1878. They began to develop a consciousness of their historical and cultural importance for the Ottoman Empire, which they increasingly began to see as a Turkish state. At the same time, the remaining European parts of the Ottoman Empire were a dynamic and modernising environment where, particularly in Macedonia, the local Ottoman elite was directly confronted with the national projects of the Christian Balkan states. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that port cities such as Salonica, but also smaller towns such as Bitola, became the incubator of the Young Turk movement.⁵⁸⁵

For the Rumeli Turks, the Ottoman defeat in the Balkan War of 1912 repeated the experience of expulsion and migration of the previous generation. The war erased Ottoman Europe from the map, except for a small wedge of land around Edirne. Turkish nationalism became the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, which the officer Mustafa Kemal from Salonica together with other Balkan *muhâcirs* founded in Anatolia in 1923 after the total defeat of the empire in the First

583 HR.SYS. 1454/4, petition from 1887; HR.SYS. 1454/5, from 1894; HR.SYS. 1454/7, from 1885; HR.SYS. 1454/8, from 1893.

584 Karpát, *Politicization of Islam*, 341–345.

585 Ibid., 342–343.

World War. Until the 1930s, the majority of the Turkish political elite was composed of men who were born in Ottoman Europe and started their career there, many of them in Macedonia.⁵⁸⁶

This experience, however, did not translate into a revanchist policy or a state-sponsored memory cult of the lost homeland. The opposite was true. The ideology of the Republic stressed the total rupture with the imperial past. One of the main adherents of this ideology of rupture was the journalist and Kemalist intellectual Falih Rıfkı Atay (1894–1971), whose father was a refugee from Rumelia. Against personal feelings of nostalgia and ‘the hard waves of Ottoman memories [that] stir in my head’, Atay gave the blunt advice: ‘Let’s forget Rumelia!’⁵⁸⁷ He proclaimed this slogan in an account of a trip to northern Greece in 1931 where he encountered the half-erased remnants of Muslim architecture in the town of Florina at the border to Yugoslavia.

Although he advised concentrating on the present instead of looking to the past, Atay was very sensitive to the intricate amalgamation of history and memory. This made him a very powerful interpreter of the transition from empire to nation state to which he had been a witness himself. In the foreword of the 1943 edition of his well-known book *Mount of Olives (Zeytindağı)* on the First World War in Palestine, he explains how this transition plays out along generational lines:

We, who are nearly forty today, are the last youth of the Ottoman Empire. Those children who in 1914 were three, five, seven years, did become the youth of new Turkey and in their memory there is no trace left of the empire. For them I want to tell about the empire’s last years in Syria, Palestine and the Hejaz.

When the enemy took Belgrade from us [in 1867?], their delegates also wanted the town of Niš. The Ottoman delegate jumped to his feet: “If that is all it is, we will also give Istanbul to you.” For our fathers Niš was so close to Istanbul. We, in contrast, thought that the Turkish nation could not live, if it would give up the Vardar, Tripoli or Crete. And for our children Europe ends at the Marmara and the Meriç.⁵⁸⁸

586 Erik Jan Zürcher, ‘The Balkan Wars and the Refugee Leadership of the Early Turkish Republic’, in *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013), 665–678.

587 Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Faşist Roma, Kemalist Tiran ve Kaybolmuş Makedonya* (Istanbul: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası), 64.

588 Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul: Remzi, 1943), 5–6.

In the generational geographies Atay sketches here, Niš had long ceased to be a place of importance; it had silently slipped off the edge of the mental maps that were changing so quickly in the post-imperial era.

8 Conclusion

The present study of late Ottoman Niš focused on urban space to capture the characteristics of the city and examine historical change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, it observed larger social, economic, political and to a lesser degree also cultural developments in the Ottoman Balkans in their effects on urban space. It argued that structural and morphological changes on the urban micro level were related to changes on larger scales such as the district, the province or the entire region. The image of territories nested within territories tried to capture this interdependence of a continuous mechanism of territory building as a fundamental way of social interaction. What we call modern territorialisation constituted a special case of this general mechanism. One of the study's key questions interrogated how territorialisation processes in the Ottoman Empire were related to Niš becoming a modern city.

From a spatial perspective, Niš exhibits the character of a typical city in Ottoman Europe, so much so that in the nineteenth century, it could be dubbed the quintessential Balkan town by a British traveller. As in all Ottoman cities, its morphology was regulated by the religious affiliation of its inhabitants. Regarding its population structure, Niš displayed a typical pattern for Balkan cities: while in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Niš had a large Muslim majority, this changed in the eighteenth century. Towards the end of that century, Orthodox Christians probably represented half of the population of Niš, and they gained a majority in the nineteenth century. This mix was augmented by a small Sephardic Jewish community as well as Muslim and Christian Roma.

The city population of Niš created a differentiated urban space reflecting their respective social and cultural identities and catering to their economic needs. Since one of the central tenets of community building was religion, urban territories were typically created around mosques, churches and synagogues. These territories were co-constituted by the Ottoman state as part of urban governance. Because most of our sources were created by the state for administrative purposes, for the historian, urban territories mainly appear as administrative entities.

Beyond establishing the general urbanistic principle of religiously defined quarters, the Ottoman state affected the structure of Niš and its urban territories in particular ways. Most fundamental was the decision to establish and legally maintain an exclusively Muslim population in the fortress and in the left bank city core. The authorities legitimised this fundamental structure by citing security issues when Niš became a border city at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As the architectural representation of the border regime within the urban space, the fortress was the most obvious sign that the Ottomans had pursued a modern form of territoriality since the eighteenth century. It was to secure the newly established line border and render the territory inside secure from outside incursions.

Although these early beginnings of territorialisation were interrupted by the phase of decentralisation in the age of the *ayans*, it imprinted a lasting structure on the city and the region. Economically, landownership became concentrated in Muslim hands and a particular regime of sharecropping emerged that was also typical for other border areas. In the city, there was a lasting segregation between Muslims and Christians. The Christian community was pushed to the periphery, but the area where they settled, the *varoş*, became the most dynamic part of the city in the nineteenth century due to migration from the countryside. The construction of a new church in the second half of the nineteenth century especially gave a spatial expression of the rising importance of the Christian community in the Tanzimat era. The church was built in collaboration with the central government as part of a new political strategy to integrate the Christian communities.

Besides religion, economic factors also shaped urban territories, but in contrast to the religious factor, this was a less state-driven process. Because transport was an important business in Niš, the overland road directly determined the location of certain business communities. Among the Orthodox Christians, there was a large group of Aromanian immigrants from Macedonia, merchants, innkeepers or transporters, whose livelihoods were directly depended upon the road.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, economic development became an issue of Ottoman territorial thinking. Together with road infrastructure, Governor Midhat Pasha rebuilt urban infrastructure, which began to change Niš in the last decade of Ottoman rule and gave it a more modern appearance. In a way, this prefigured the effect of the railway, which was built a decade after the city had become Serbian.

Another issue of the renewed effort by the Ottoman government to penetrate and develop its European provinces was to recreate the administrative framework. The administrative territorialisation revealed Niš's character as a hinge in the geopolitical structure of the Balkans, a region that connected Bulgaria, Serbia and Kosovo. It was influenced by all of these regional contexts, but did not exclusively belong to any of them.

This geopolitical in-between position together with its role as an important stop on the route from Istanbul to Belgrade and as a border city shaped the urbanity of Ottoman Niš in fundamental ways since at least the eighteenth century. After the Ottomans left the city in 1878, concerning its architecture and its population structure, Niš became a Serbian city. However, its Ottoman legacy to a certain degree was conserved in its morphology. Some of the above-mentioned fundamental factors shaping the city, e.g. the border and the road, continue to exist, too. They constitute another factor of continuity that perhaps makes exploring the Ottoman history of Niš worthwhile even today.

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PA = Politisches Archiv

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Istanbul

A.}MKT.UM.. = Sadaret, Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayat Evrakı

C..AS.. = Cevdet Tasnifi, Askeriye

C..DH.. = Cevdet Tasnifi, Dahiliye

C..EV.. = Cevdet Tasnifi, Evkaf

C..ML.. = Cevdet Tasnifi, Maliye

HAT = Hatt-ı Hümayun

HR.H... = Hariciye Nezareti, Hukuk Kısmı

HR.İM.. = Hariciye Nezareti, İstanbul Murahhaslığı

HR.SYS. = Hariciye Nezareti, Siyasi

HRT.h.. = Haritalar

İ..DH.. = İrade, Dahiliye

İ..MMS. = İrade, Meclis-i Mahsus

İ..MVL. = İrade, Meclis-i Vâlâ

İE.HR.. = İbnülemin Tasnifi, Hariciye

MAD.d.. = Maliyeden Müdevver Defterleri

ML.VRD.CMH.d... = Maliye Nezareti, Varidat Muhasebesi, Cizye Defterleri

ML.VRD.TMT.d... = Maliye Nezareti, Varidat Muhasebesi, Temettuat Defterleri

MVL = Meclis-i Vala

NFS.d.. = Nüfus Defterleri

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Index

- Abdülhamid II, 180, 195, 213, 243
- Abdülmecid I, 162, 185
- Abdurrahman Efendi (*kadı*), 158, 175
- Adriatic Sea, 36, 50, 145, 172
- Ahmed Cevdet Pasha. *See* Cevdet Pasha
- Ahmed Lutfi Efendi. *See* Lutfi Efendi
- Ahmed Midhat Efendi, 188
- Alacahisar. *See* Kruševac
- Albania, 103, 106, 124, 128, 130, 131, 174, 207, 209
- Aleksinac, 114, 123
- ambassadors/embassies
- exchange of, 33, 53–55
 - of Great Powers, 218–21, 223
 - Habsburg/Austrian, 33, 35, 40, 54, 69, 75, 77, 87, 98, 116, 111, 117
 - French, 42
 - Ottoman, 54, 98
- Anastas v. Marko/Kranyalı Anastas (merchant), 149, 151, 174
- angarya*, 165, 170, 172
- arabacı*, 129, 152, 155, 158
- See also* cart driver
- Archangels Michael and Gabriel, Church of the Ss., 124–26, 162, 167
- Arnavud Market, 123, 146, 147, 158, 228
- Aromanians, 124, 128, 131–2, 147, 151–54, 248
- Atay, Falih Rıfki, 245–46
- autonomy
- of territories, 25–26, 27, 94, 110, 113, 114, 115, 139, 213, 217–18, 220–22, 231
 - of cities, 91, 95, 110, 118–20
- ayans*. *See* notables
- Bajrakli Mosque, 229, 236
- bandits, 37, 95, 96, 97, 102, 103, 106, 107, 108, 110, 116, 119–20, 130, 194, 202, 203, 209, 215
- Karafeyzi and son Ali, 107, 110, 116
- bazaar/market, 40, 82, 122, 145, 147, 153, 159
- inspector/*muhtesib*, 42, 98
- Bazaar Mosque, 44, 81
- bekar*, 152–53, 155
- See also* migrants/migration: labour
- Bela Palanka, 38, 207, 216
- Belgrad Gate, 32, 60, 71
- Belgrad Quarter, 60, 85, 142, 146–47, 155, 158–59, 212, 214, 235, 236, 242
- Belgrad Quarter Mosque, 212, 214, 236
- Belgrade, 45, 199–200, 231–32
- as fortress city, 24, 26, 69–70, 90–92, 99, 117, 139, 206
 - Pashalik of, 47–48, 92, 99–101, 109–11, 115, 117–8, 138–39, 206
 - Treaty of, 52, 56
- Belimarković, Jovan, 228
- Bender, 49, 88
- Beogradmala, 32–33

- Berkovitsa/Berkovça, 120, 209, 210
- Berlin, Treaty of, 108, 213, 214, 217, 223, 225, 236, 237
- bishop, 85, 86, 90, 91, 98, 111, 117, 124, 126, 167, 171, 182, 188, 191, 193, deputy of, 140, 183, 185 of the Exarchate, 190, 219, 233
- Bitola, 138, 153, 207, 218, 242, 244
- Bojanić, Dušanka, 17, 43–44
- border, 14–5, 22–30, 50, 57, 88, 119, 194, 210, 213, 222, 245, 248 demarcation of, 25, 53, 54, 56–57, 205, 223–24 Habsburg-Ottoman, 15, 25–27, 30, 33–34, 50, 52–59, 69–70, 72, 74, 88, 90–92, 108–9, 127, 129, 205 Ottoman internal, 46, 48, 102, 111, 113, 115, 177, 207–9, 219, 224 rivers as, 50, 55, 57, 58 Serbian-Bulgarian, 203, 223–24 Serbian-Ottoman, 9, 27, 107–8, 114, 174, 203, 205–6, 209, 223, 228
- border city, 26–27, 52–53, 71, 77, 82, 88–92, 127, 248–49
- borderland/border region, 22, 24, 56, 58–59, 65–66, 70, 74, 77, 82, 88–89, 98, 101, 109–10, 139, 164, 203, 208, 248
- Bosnia *çiftliks* in, 171, 224 revolt in, 208, 213, 215–18
- Boué, Ami, 207
- Breznik, 107, 126, 222
- bridge, 37, 48, 63, 119, 195 over the Nišava, 11–12, 29, 32, 37, 39, 40, 42, 51, 59–60, 63, 64, 72, 230
- bridgehead, 59, 60, 63, 72, 73, 121, 122
- Buda/Budapest/Budin, 34, 40, 131 province/*eyalet* of, 47–48
- Bulgaria, 22, 32, 37, 77, 107, 119, 145, 153, 193, 203, 208, 209–10, 231, 248 autonomous province of, 218–21 refugees from, 227, 242 Principality of, 213, 222–23 textile sector in, 150–51
- Bulgarian Exarchate, 190–92, 219, 223, 233
- Bulgarian language, 172, 190, 198
- bus/coach, 12, 31–33
- Busbecq, Ogier Ghiselin de, 33–34, 54
- Candia. *See* Iraklion
- caravanserai 34, 35, 37, 39, 40
- çarşı*. *See* bazaar
- cart/coach, 34, 36, 68, 72, 106, 202, 203–4, 234 stagecoach, 203–4
- cart driver, 129, 131, 146, 147, 148, 152, 155, 158
- Carters'/Arabacı Quarter, 155, 158
- Cathedral, 124, 132, 161–62, 188–92
- Cedid Quarter, 142, 157
- Čele Kula, 112, 115–17
- census, 19, 33, 38, 52, 81–82, 92, 121, 124, 133–60, 163, 174, 181, 193, 224, 225–26 poll tax register, 140, 149–53, 154–55 *tahrir*, 43–45 Wealth Survey, 136, 142–49, 150, 151, 152, 154, 155, 159, 175, 177, 179, 181
- Cevdet Pasha, 119, 120, 171–72, 240
- churches, 13–14, 20, 43, 79, 82, 85, 90–92, 126, 132, 152, 156–57, 162–63, 189, 191–92, 212, 229–30, 247 *See also individual churches*: Archangels, Cathedral, City, Nicholas.
- çiftliks*, 144, 145, 146, 147, 163, 169–81, 194, 199 in Belgrade Pashalik, 100, 169 in Bosnia, 171, 224 of Hafız Pasha and family, 99, 105, 174–75, 177, 200, 212 liquidation of, 224–25, 227, 234, 239, 240, 242, 243

- in Macedonia, 170, 173, 176, 243
 - in Vidin, 89, 169–70, 176
 - women or non-Muslims as owners of, 174, 176–77, 180
- Cincar. *See* Aromanians
- Cincar Quarter, 124, 142, 147, 153
- City Church, 87, 124–25
- cizye*. *See* tax: poll tax
 - See also* census: poll tax register
- clock tower, 75, 80, 91
- conversion/converts, 44, 70, 76, 121, 187
 - of mosques and churches, 86, 90, 199, 229, 233
- çorbacı*. *See* notables: Christian
- council, 162, 172, 182, 183, 184, 188, 192, 194, 199, 204, 208, 219
 - Council of Education, 187
 - bishop's, 81–82, 185–86
 - municipal, 182, 201
 - Supreme Council, 195, 196, 202, 208, 209
- courier, 38, 138
- Crete, 69, 71, 76, 217, 245
- customs duties, 104, 127, 129, 130, 140, 203
- Daleković/Daljaković/Daljković, Feliks, 122, 143, 197, 230
- Damjanov, Andreja, 189
- Danube
 - as border, 26, 50, 57, 58
 - as waterway, 34, 48, 49, 127, 129, 204
- Danube Province, 154, 163, 190, 195, 198, 200–202, 204, 206, 209–10, 218–20, 222
- Dapontes, Constantine, 86
- Defterdar Mosque, 83
- Defterdar Quarter, 142, 147, 157
- Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Pasha, 59, 67–69
- de–Ottomanisation, 214, 227, 228, 230, 233
- derbent*, 37–38, 119
- Dernschwam, Hans, 35, 37, 43
- Dimitrijević, Jelena, 240–41
- Đorđi veled–i Todori/Đoko Todor/Đoko Todorović (merchant), 151–52
- Dragoman pass, 38, 62, 202
- Draževac (village), 153, 174, 177, 178
- Driesch, Gerhard Cornelius von den, 52, 53–54, 59, 64, 70, 75–77, 90, 98, 127
- Dubrovnik, 36, 43, 45
- Evliya Çelebi, 35, 40, 42, 45
- Edirne, 37, 40, 45, 49, 187
 - province of, 204, 207, 218, 222
- Edirneli Bali Mosque, 12, 44, 52, 81, 212
- Edirneli Bali Quarter, 44, 81, 157
- Emir Hafız Hacı Mustafa (father of Hafız Mustafa Pasha), 98, 99, 129–30, 169
- engineers, 59–60, 62, 63, 64, 65–66, 69–70, 72, 74, 184, 196, 204, 230, 231, 232
- Epirus, 106, 124, 128, 130, 153
- Esmâ Hanım (*çiftlik* owner), 172, 173
- farm quarters, 159, 142, 152, 150–60
- Fethiye Mosque, 86, 199–200, 211, 229–30
- Fethiye Quarter, 161, 199–200, 228, 229, 242
- Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, 67, 78
- fortress, 51–53, 59, 61–65, 67–75, 126, 183–85, 212, 228, 231, 235
- fortress city, 49, 33, 55, 60–61, 65–67, 88
- Foucault, Michel, 28, 134
- frontier, 23–25, 27, 49, 56–57, 89
- Fukara/Rızaiye Mosque, 83
- gates, 12, 60, 71–74, 90, 92, 116
 - See also individual gates*: Belgrad, Istanbul, Leskofça, Sofya, Ürgüb or Leskofça, Vidin
- Gadžin Han (village), 46, 178
- Gjakova, 145, 172, 209
- glacis, 59, 63, 83

gospodarlik, 89, 169

Greek revolt, 94, 217

Gudenus, Philipp Franz, 77, 92

Hacı Bekir Quarter, 124, 142, 146, 158

Hafız Mustafa Pasha, 93–95, 98–99, 101–6, 108, 109, 110, 111–12, 116, 120

Hafızpaşazade Ahmed Bey, 108, 174, 177

Hafızpaşazade Ali Bey, 107, 138, 145, 153, 174, 200

Hafızpaşazade Bekir Bey, 93, 108, 161, 174, 177, 235, 239, 240, 242

Hafızpaşazade Mahmud Pasha, 94, 106–7, 145, 153

hamam, 39, 42, 52, 105, 234, 241

hornwork. *See* bridgehead

Hristodulo, Nikola (merchant), 151–52, 173, 174

Hungary, 50

war in, 24, 26, 41, 47, 48, 49, 55, 65–66

trade with, 127

Hünkar Mosque, 40, 43, 73, 81, 143

Hünkar Quarter, 81, 43, 142–44, 157, 243, 244

Hurşid Ahmed Pasha, 112, 114, 115–17, 125

imam, 82, 137, 144, 145, 156, 158, 183, 185

inspector, 164, 166, 167, 168, 172, 173, 174, 193, 195

Ioannina, 119, 151, 153, 154

İpek. *See* Peja

Iraklion, 69, 71, 76

İşkodralı Mustafa Pasha, 106–7

İslam Aga Mosque, 12, 211–212, 229, 236

Ismail Pasha (governor), 184

islahhane/reformatory, 197–98

Istanbul Gate (city gate), 83, 87, 124–25, 155, 158, 198

Istanbul Gate (fortress gate), 32, 51–52, 63, 71, 74

İvranye. *See* Vranje

İznebol. *See* Tran

Jagodin (village/quarter), 89, 142, 185

Jagodina, 34, 80

janissaries, 42, 43, 54, 75–77, 88, 89, 94, 98–101, 102, 119, 133, 139, 162

of Belgrade, 76, 94, 98, 99–102, 108, 109–11, 115, 129, 130, 206

as landowners, 89–90, 100, 169

as merchants, 129–30

Janke, Franz, 231

Jews, 43, 45, 79, 82–83, 87, 91, 92, 141, 154–5, 158, 183, 184, 190, 227, 232, 238, 240, 247

Jireček, Konstantin, 39

Josimović, Emilijan, 232

kadı, 38, 46, 80, 96, 100, 107, 133, 158, 135, 173, 175, 229

Kanitz, Felix, 9, 34, 175, 230, 233–35

Karageorge/Đorđe Petrović, 110, 113, 114, 115, 118

Karlowitz, Treaty of, 25, 55–57, 80

Katip Çelebi, 49–50

kaza, 38, 96–98, 138, 182, 224

Kebir Kiptiyan Quarter, 142, 147–49

Kempelen, Johann Andreas Christoph, 87–88

khan, 9, 35, 40, 123, 130, 152, 153, 158, 174, 196, 198, 200, 203, 241

Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Pasha, 171, 172, 193, 194

King Milan Square, 12, 21, 32, 121, 212

Kıpti. *See* Roma

kinacı, 146, 148, 152, 158

See also cart driver

kocabaşı. *See* notables: Christian

kol, 38–39, 49–50

konak, 118

bishop's, 124, 125, 126, 148, 157, 233

- governor's, 71, 84, 143, 161, 183, 187, 196, 197
- Hafız Pasha's, 21, 93–94, 95, 108, 122, 145, 161, 235
- in Medoševac, 174
- Köprülüzade Fazıl Mustafa Pasha, 65, 79
- Kosovo, 36, 48, 62, 77, 78, 145, 193, 207, 209, 212, 215, 216, 229, 248
- bakers from, 154, 158
- battle of, 112
- province/*vilayet* of, 210, 222, 223
- refugees to, 214, 226, 241
- Kosto v. Todori/Kir Kosto (merchant), 151–52, 174
- Kruševac, 47, 48, 138–39
- Kruška Quarter, 142
- Kuršumlja/Kurşunlu, 207, 208, 209, 210
- labour
- duties, 165, 170, 172
- forced, 68, 69, 91, 184, 202
- land code, 171, 172, 173, 180
- landowners/*eshab-ı alaka*, 145, 173, 175, 179, 183
- Lebanon, 25, 171, 217
- Lerch, Johann Martin, 64
- Leskovac/Leskovça, 83, 114, 126, 153, 154, 166, 167, 171, 172, 173, 174, 180, 207, 208, 209, 219
- Leskofça Gate, 148, 197
- Lovech/Lofça, 119–20
- Louis William, Margrave of Baden, 55, 62, 63
- Lutfi Efendi, 207–8
- Macedonia, 77, 78, 36, 129, 191, 193, 207, 215, 220, 244, 245, 248
- çiftliks* in, 170, 173, 176, 243
- labour migrants from, 95, 124, 153–54, 158, 189, 248
- merchants from, 128, 130, 145, 151, 248
- refugees in, 214, 242, 243
- mahalle*. *See* quarter
- Mahmud II, 114, 133, 134, 139, 162, 206
- Manastir. *See* Bitola
- map, 21–22
- border, 58, 223
- cadastral, 180–81
- Habsburg of fortress and city, 60–61, 63–66, 68, 72–75, 83–85, 87, 121–22, 124–25
- mental, 33, 34, 49–50, 204, 246
- portolan and strip, 50
- as propaganda tool, 53, 66, 73–74
- Serbian of 1878, 143, 148, 157, 158, 184, 197, 198, 200, 230
- Marsigli, Luigi Ferdinando, 57, 63, 64
- Matejevac (village), 164, 165, 178
- Matrakçı Nasuh, 41–42, 49
- Meclis-i Vala. *See* council: Supreme Council
- Medoševac (village), 105, 174, 175, 178
- Mehmed Ali Pasha, 102, 115
- Mehmed İsmet Pasha (governor), 208–9
- Mehmed Vasif Pasha (governor), 187, 188, 208
- menzil*, 38, 97, 98, 204
- merchants/traders, 29, 35, 91, 110, 126, 130, 144, 146, 147, 149, 152, 153, 158, 168, 169, 172, 174, 179, 183, 185, 186, 204, 205, 243
- Aromanian, 124, 131–32, 151–52, 173, 248
- from Dubrovnik/Ragusa, 36, 43, 45
- Europe Merchants/*Avrupa tüccarları*, 140–41, 151, 165
- from Gjakova, 145, 172
- Habsburg, 127, 129
- janissaries as, 76, 98–99, 129–30
- Vienna diaspora of, 128–29, 130
- Midhat Pasha, 163, 188, 190, 194, 195–205, 209, 210, 218, 228, 230, 234–35, 248

- migrants/migration, 19, 30, 91, 95, 134, 135, 140
 labour, 128, 131, 153–54. *See also* bekar, pečalbarstvo
 Muslim, 92, 226, 227, 228, 241–44
 rural to urban, 121, 149, 248
See also refugees
- Mihailo Obrenović, 168, 215
 Milan Obrenović, 93, 226, 227, 230, 235
 Miloš Obrenović, 113, 118, 126, 208
 military architects. *See* engineers
 military urbanism, 53, 61, 73, 90
 mobility, 9, 14–15, 27–30, 33, 38–39, 46, 48, 50, 64, 76, 131
 modernisation, 14, 190, 210, 227, 241
 of fortifications, 66, 69–70
 of infrastructure, 30, 163, 183, 195–96, 201, 203
 See also urban modernity/modernisation
- Moldavia, 86, 126, 217
 Molla İslam (merchant, *çiflik* owner), 172, 175, 177, 212
 Montenegro, 37, 208, 213, 215, 216, 217, 222
 Morava, 34, 46, 53, 55, 175
 Morea, 50, 72, 89, 126
 Moschopolis, 130, 131
 mosques
 as centres of quarters, 43, 73, 137, 156, 247
 conversion or destruction of, 90, 212, 228–30, 233, 235
 as means of urban development, 82, 118, 123
 in Serbia, 236–37
 See also individual mosques: Bajrakli, Bazaar, Belgrad Quarter, Cedit, Defterdar, Edirneli Bali, Fethiye, Fukara/Rızaiye, Hacı Bekir, Hünkâr, Paşa, İslam Ağa, Rajana, Yahya Paşa
- Mostar, 119, 190
 mountain passes, 37, 48, 202
 derbent institution at, 37–38, 119
 muezzin, 82, 137, 145, 146, 158, 237
müfettiş. *See* inspector
muhacir. *See* refugees: Muslim
muhassıl, 165, 208–9
muhtar, 137, 146, 183, 186
muhtesib, 42, 98
 Mustafa Ağa, Hacı (*çiflik* owner), 145, 175, 177
 Mustafa Pasha, Hacı (governor of Belgrade), 101, 109
 Mustafa Paşa Palanka. *See* Bela Palanka
 Mustafa Sabri Pasha. *See* Sabri Pasha
 Mustafic, Jakub/Yakub Ağa, 237
- nahiye*, 46–47
nakibüleşraf, 138, 186
 nationalism, 13, 15–17, 25, 27, 94, 109, 112–14, 190, 212–13, 215, 219–23, 227, 229, 231, 244
 Nenadović, Matija, 111
 New Areas, 213, 214, 217, 223–27, 232–33, 236–37
 Nicholas, Church of St., 85–86, 124, 199, 229
 Nikopol/Niğbolu, 35, 120
 Nišava, 34, 38, 42, 46, 185
 Nišli Mehmed Ağa, 97–98
 notables, 21, 42, 94–97, 100, 113, 115, 118–20, 137, 138, 162
 Christian, 110, 113, 165, 167, 168, 172, 174, 182, 183, 193, 194
 Novaković, Stojan, 113, 236
 Novi Sad, 17, 92
- Orthodox Church, 91, 126, 189–91
 See also Bulgarian Exarchate
 Osman Pasvantoğlu. *See* Pasvantoğlu Osman
 Palilula Quarter, 142, 199

- palisades, 42, 60, 62, 65, 66, 67, 70, 73, 74, 82, 123, 124, 125
 Papas Đorđe Quarter, 142, 147–48
 Papas İstanko Quarter, 142, 147–48
 Papas Kosto Quarter, 142, 147
 Papas Yona Quarter, 142, 147
 Paraćin, 53, 55, 111, 113, 114, 130
 parks, 12, 51, 230, 232
 Paşa Mosque, 82–83, 122, 145, 154
 Passarowitz
 Treaty of, 52, 53, 55–56, 58, 76
 commercial treaty of, 91, 127–28, 129
 Pasvantoğlu Osman, 94, 101, 102–3, 107, 110, 120, 130
 Pavlović, Kosta, 233
pečalbarstvo, 131, 152, 189
 See also migrants/migration: labour
 Peja, 154, 209
 petitions, 83, 86, 89, 101, 126, 165, 171, 186–89, 239, 243
 Petrovaradin/Peterwardein, 69, 92
 pious foundations, 19, 43, 123, 154, 225, 236
 Pirot, 45, 107, 120, 154, 167, 190, 191, 193, 205, 207, 208, 209, 210, 216, 219, 223
 sancak of, 222, 223
 plan. *See* map
 Pleven/Plevna, 120, 216
 port city, 15, 36, 145, 163, 244
 powder magazine, 12, 52, 80, 212
 priest, 43, 67, 80, 140, 147, 149, 150, 157, 167, 193
 Prilep/Pirlepe, 126, 153, 154
 Prokuplje, 36, 46, 174, 207, 208, 209
 quarter
 definition of, 20–21, 156–57, 248
 imams vs. *muhtars* as heads of, 137
 newly planned, 73, 201, 231. *See also* Fethiye Quarter
 Serbian of Belgrade, 91
 in 15th and 16th century, 43–44
 See also individual quarters: Belgrad, Edirneli Bali, Carters'/Arabacı, Cedit, Cincar, Defterdar, farm quarters, Fethiye, Hünkâr, Jagodin, Kebir Kiptiyan, Kruška, Papas Đorđe, Papas İstanko, Papas Kosto, Papas Yona, Palilula, Rajana, Rızaie, Sagir Kiptiyan, Taşköprü, *varoş*, Yahya Paşa
 Ragusa, 36, 43, 45
 railway, 30, 32, 204–5, 248
 Orient Express, 32, 205
 Rajana Mosque, 123
 Rajana Quarter, 123
 Rızaie/Fukara Mosque, 83
 Rızaie Quarter, 83, 147, 157
 refugees
 Christian, 78, 79, 117, 166, 168
 Muslim, 80, 85, 139, 161, 214, 225, 226, 241–44
 quarter for, 200, 228, 229
 religiouscape, 86, 229, 230
 road, 27–30, 36–39
 Istanbul–Belgrade, 29, 36–39, 49–50, 64, 123, 153, 203
 macadamised/şose, 202, 203
 built by Midhat, 195, 201–6, 210, 235
 Niš–Vidin, 101, 203–4
 Roman/Via militaris, 29, 32, 34, 39
 shaping territory, 48, 163, 205–6, 210
 shaping mental map, 49–50
 and urban development, 32, 81–83, 123
 Roma, 38, 43, 45, 83, 87–88, 124, 141, 147, 155, 158, 159, 237–38, 247
 Rumelia, 39, 48, 49–50, 187, 242, 244, 245
 centre of, 48, 206, 207, 209
 governor of, 48, 75, 82, 115
rüşdiye, 181, 186–88, 196
 Ruse/Ruşçuk, 102, 198, 201, 204

- Sabri Pasha (governor), 164, 165, 166, 168, 169, 208
- Sagir Kiptiyan Quarter, 124, 142, 147, 158
- Salima Hatun (widow), 146, 177
- Salonica, 45, 50, 129, 152, 196, 218, 242, 244
- San Stefano, Treaty of, 213, 217, 222, 223
- Sarajevo, 26, 36, 119, 190, 192
- Sava, 50, 55, 57, 58, 91, 139
- school, 91, 124, 157, 181, 184, 186–88, 196, 197, 236
- gymnasium, 198, 230, 232
- reformatory/*ıslahhane*, 197–98
- rüşdiye*, 181, 186–88, 196
- segregation, 20–21, 89, 91, 136, 248
- Şehirköy. *See* Pirot
- Selanik. *See* Salonica
- Semendire. *See* Smederevo
- Semendire, *sancak* of. *See* Belgrade: Pashalik of Serbia
- Habsburg Kingdom of, 90
- Principality of, 17, 27, 113, 139, 164, 206, 208, 216, 226
- See also* New Areas
- Serbian Uprising, 94, 100, 101, 104, 107, 109–18, 125–26, 130
- serhad*, 27, 89
- See also* frontier
- Serres, 129, 131, 218
- sewer, 123, 157, 232
- sharecroppers, 89, 169–73, 176, 181, 224
- See also* çiftlik
- Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, 67, 78
- Silistra/Silistre, 195, 204, 208
- sipahi, 42, 43, 46, 48, 70, 75, 99, 100, 138–39, 145, 146, 169, 170, 171, 174, 179
- Skopje, 50, 62, 78, 80, 107, 114, 155, 189, 218, 222
- as part of Bulgarian Exarchate, 219–20
- Skull Tower, 112, 115–17
- slave/slavery, 72, 75, 77, 78, 87, 106, 166
- Smederevo, 29, 47, 48, 92, 115, 190
- Sofia, 32, 36, 40, 45, 49, 50, 62, 77, 78, 87, 102, 107, 120, 127, 154, 165, 193, 198, 231
- as centre of Rumelia, 48, 206, 209
- sancak*/Pashalik of, 206, 207, 208, 209, 218, 222
- Sofya Gate, 60
- Sremac, Stevan, 124, 198
- Stratimirović, Stefan, 111
- Stürmer, Ignaz Lorenz von, 111, 116
- subaşı*, 42, 100
- Sufi/dervish
- lodges/convents, 35, 40, 236, 242
- sheikhs, 37–38, 183, 185, 186
- Şükriye Hanım (*çiftlik* owner), 147, 177, 234
- Süleyman I, 33, 41
- synagogue, 20, 79, 83, 156, 247
- Syria, 162, 195, 245
- Taşköprü Quarter, 82, 108, 123, 142, 145, 147, 157, 175
- tahrir*, 43–45
- Tarnovo, 204, 218, 222
- tatar*. *See* courier
- tax
- boycott/revolt of 1841, 162–68, 170, 215
- debts, 105, 106, 170
- farming, 96, 98, 100, 108, 138, 170
- poll tax, 79, 88, 105, 140–41, 149–50, 155, 156
- privileges and exemptions, 37, 79, 119, 138, 140, 165, 168
- reform of system, 79, 142, 165, 170, 208
- Temeşvar. *See* Timișoara
- temettuat* registers. *See* census: Wealth Survey
- Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, 102, 106, 115, 119, 131
- territory/territoriality/territorialisation, 18, 247

- administrative, 20, 43, 46, 48, 80, 135, 206, 207, 209, 210, 247, 248
- and borders/boundaries, 21–23, 38, 71, 163, 194, 208, 213, 224
- and economic development, 163, 169, 180, 205, 248
- in empires vs. modern states, 23–26, 56–57, 94, 95, 97, 102, 106, 205, 217, 221, 248
- and ethnicity/nationality, 109, 113, 191, 218, 220, 221
- and mobility, 27–30, 33, 46, 48–50, 163
- in cities, 18–21, 26–27, 28, 43, 50, 73, 75, 80, 156, 158, 153, 248
- and population, 134–135, 181, 225–26
- and religion, 20, 73, 86, 157, 191, 192, 217, 247. *See also* religiouscape
- Thessaloniki. *See* Salonica
- Thrace, 154, 191
- timar*, 46, 89, 99, 138–39, 170, 171
- Timișoara, 55, 58, 59, 69, 92
- Tirnova. *See* Tarnovo
- Todorov, Nikolai, 16, 150
- Topkapı Palace, 71, 116
- Toponica (village), 153, 174, 178
- trade, 15, 29, 30, 36, 58, 82, 91, 95, 101, 121, 127–32, 140, 145, 151, 158, 159, 166, 172, 203, 205
 - routes of, 36, 95, 121, 127, 129–31, 151
- Tran, 107, 207, 208, 209, 210, 223
- Transylvania, 35, 55, 57, 128
- travel accounts/travellers, 32–37, 39–40, 42–43, 54, 79, 98, 112, 119, 154, 208–9, 231, 233–34, 237
- Tričković, Radmila, 17, 19, 60, 69, 83, 89, 123, 169
- Tuna* gazette, 201, 202, 204
- Tuna Vilayeti. *See* Danube Province
- ulak*. *See* courier
- urban autonomy. *See* autonomy: of cities
- urban governance, 14, 28, 163, 181–82, 186, 192, 201, 247
- urban growth/expansion, 13, 27, 44, 82–83, 95, 118, 121, 123, 159–60, 199–200
 - See also* farm quarters, Fethiye Quarter, Palilula Quarter
- urban modernity/modernisation, 15, 161, 163, 183, 192, 194, 196, 214, 227, 230–33
- Ürgüb. *See* Prokuplje
- Ürgüb or Leskofça Gate, 83, 123
- Üsküb. *See* Skopje
- vakıf*. *See* pious foundation
- Varna, 140, 193, 204
- varoş*
 - as institution, 81–82, 147, 157, 186
 - as place, 81–82, 140, 148, 149, 156, 157, 158, 159, 192, 199, 248
- Vienna
 - Ottoman merchants in, 128, 130, 131
 - siege of, 65
- Vidin, 45, 49, 58, 92, 129, 130, 131, 140, 195, 223
 - as border city, 59, 88–90, 208
 - çiftlik*s in, 89, 169–70, 176
 - under Pasvantoglu, 94, 102–3, 110, 119
 - building roads to, 203–04
- Vidin Gate, 60, 63, 74
- villages, 45, 46, 48, 150, 165–68, 172–73, 215
 - churches built in, 85, 126, 189
 - turned into *çiftlik*s, 100, 169–70, 171
 - alongside roads, 37–38, 202. *See also* *derbent*
 - migration from, 131–32, 139, 152, 226–27. *See also* migrants/migration: rural to urban
- Vranje, 154, 166, 210, 216, 223, 227
- Walachia, 57, 86, 110, 114, 217, 231

Winter, Franz, 230–32, 233

wool, 105, 128, 145, 148, 151

Woolweavers' Market, 105

Yahya Paşa Mosque, 83, 123

Yahya Paşa Quarter, 123–24, 147, 148, 158

Yakova. *See* Gjakova

Yakub Pasha, 164, 167, 168

yamaks. *See* janissaries: of Belgrade

Yanya. *See* Ioannina

Yeğen Mehmed Pasha, 86, 199

Zemun, 55, 91, 117, 130, 131

Zeynelabidin Pasha (governor), 172, 173, 186,
193–94, 196

The city of Niš, now in Serbia, was part of the Ottoman Empire for about half a millennium. This study offers the first in-depth examination of the city's history during the last phase of Ottoman rule, from 1700 to 1878. It traces the development of a city that was located on one of the main routes across the Balkans and an important military stronghold near the new border with the Habsburg Monarchy. The study places a strong emphasis on the development of urban space, which it understands as consisting of multiple overlapping territories. Urban life was characterised by different religious and ethnic communities, which were governed by the Ottoman authorities with the help of local elites. Overall, Niš emerges as a typical Ottoman city, whose development was embedded in wider political, economic and social trends of the Ottoman Balkans.

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