

# EVIDENCE OF MACEDONIA IN THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

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The establishment of Ottoman Turkish rule, which took place at the end of the 14th century, had two main consequences of a lasting nature for Macedonia and its population. The first consequence was that in the following five hundred years, up to the end of Ottoman Turkish rule in 1912, there occurred as never hitherto nor thereafter an interruption in economic, cultural and general communications over the entire territory. The name of that particular territory, Macedonia, was never questioned in the course of the numerous administrative or territorial changes which took place in the course of Ottoman Turkish rule. One of the strong proofs and indications of this was the "Sketch of the Territory of Macedonia" (resm-i memleket- Makedonya) published on page 277 of the well-known work of the equally well-known Turkish historian, geographer and travel-writer of the mid-17th century, Hadzi Kalfa Mustafa or Katib Celebija. The Venetian captain Gio Mario Delj Angiolelo, a captive of the Turks, traveling overland from the south towards Salonica, wrote in his diary: "8th August 1470. The Sultan halted and put up for the night on the other side of the gorge in a small plain forming the Macedonian border... On 10th August, setting out from Platamon, the Sultan halted and put up for the night in a place called Kitros, in the gulf of the same name. Here there were many salt pans and not far away a large river called the Vardar which flows through Macedonia and into the Gulf of Thessaloniki...". In a telegram of 7th April 1903 from the Grand Viziers's Office is written: "Information concerning the Sultan's command that in all addresses to and announcements in connection with the Rumeli vilayets (the Vilayets of Skopje, Bitola and Thessaloniki): from henceforth the local names are to be used and under no circumstances the name Macedonia". This was a reaction to the persistent emphasis on the name of Macedonia on the part of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization and also by the European press and diplomatic representatives at the time when the

decision about an uprising was taken. The second consequence was that the entire population which had been taken was put in the subjugated position of captives, with a serious threat that in the course of time it would lose its identity. Up to the close of the 18th century religious persuasion was the basic yardstick by which the Ottoman Turkish authorities classified the population (the rayah) in the state. Thus all the official censuses carried out in the course of the 15th and 16th centuries, and to a certain extent in the 18th century, described the population of Macedonia exclusively as the "non-believing population" (i.e. the Christian population), the Moslem population and the Jewish population. Such treatment contributed to a great extent to the process of leveling or at least reducing ethnic differences, particularly between the related Slav peoples - which does not, however, mean that those differences disappeared altogether. In this period too there were instances of the presence of a Macedonian national sentiment. In his accounts of his travels the 15th century travel-writer Bertrandon de la Broquiere writes: "And there are .... many Christians who perforce serve the Turk, such as Greeks, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Albanians, Esclavoni, Razici, Serbians... and Vlachs... And Angiolelo, whom we have already mentioned, says of Mt. Athos that: "...it is very high, and here are to be found many monasteries of Christian monks, of whom some are Greeks, others Macedonians, Vlachs and even Italians, as well other nations, who live the lives of saints". Despite all the pressures on the part of the alien-faithed and foreign-born authorities, Macedonia in this period too, when it was a deep province of Ottoman Turkey was the scene of efforts to shake off its bondage. Here particular mention should be made of the spiritual leaders of the Archbishopric of Ohrid who approached the courts of Europe with requests for assistance in taking action against their captors. Athanasius, the Archbishop of Ohrid at the close of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries, was outstanding in this respect. The height of the freedom-seeking action of the Macedonian people in this pre-revolutionary period was the Karposh Uprising of 1689. The situation in Macedonia throughout the period of Ottoman Turkish feudal rule is well portrayed in the words of the French Consul in Salonica at the close of the 18th century, Felix de Beaujour: "If one regards Macedonia from the point of view of its natural advantages, one comes to the conclusion that there exists no land in Europe where the people have more prospects of prosperity. But if it is viewed from the aspect of its political forms, one comes to the conclusion that all the misfortunes of the barbarian administration have been assembled here in order to paralyze one of the most beautiful regions of the world in all its richness and variety of products.