

Introduction

The present study explores the formation of the Muslim community in the regions of Deliorman and Gerlovo (and adjacent areas) in the north-eastern Balkans (modern northeastern Bulgaria) from the late fifteenth through the sixteenth centuries. In the late fifteenth century, Gerlovo, a small mountain valley region on the northern edges of the central-eastern Balkan range, and Deliorman (lit. “Wild Forest,” mod. Ludogorie),¹ a much larger, hilly, wooded plateau to the north of Gerlovo, were underpopulated and underinstitutionalized (the presence of the rising Ottoman state being minimal), but by the end of the following century the areas were densely populated, with Muslims constituting a solid majority. The two regions came to be firmly incorporated into the Ottoman territorial-administrative framework, in which three urban centers, two well-established and one emerging, served as strongholds of Ottoman provincial authority through which the imperial center in Istanbul projected its power.

The Ottoman central state had a particular interest in asserting its control in the region. From the late fifteenth through the mid-sixteenth centuries the area’s countryside witnessed an influx of large groups of mostly semi-nomadic (Muslim) Turcomans and heterodox dervishes; the dervishes usually serving the semi-nomadic Turcomans as spiritual guides and generally harboring attitudes of opposition toward the centralizing Ottoman state. Some of these migrants came from Thrace and the eastern Rhodope Mountains, to which their forefathers had come from Anatolia in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Others migrated directly from Anatolia, in the context of the evolving Ottoman-Safavid conflict,

¹ Deliorman is etymologically connected to the Cuman-Kipchak “Teleorman,” which has the same meaning. Note the existence of the modern Romanian province Teleorman (and the eponymous river) on the left bank of the Danube; see T. Kowalski, J. Reyhmann, and A. Zajackowski, “Deli-Orman,” *EI*². In Ottoman administrative sources from the sixteenth century it also appears as “Divane Orman” (again carrying the same meaning), while in Ottoman narrative sources of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the region is often referred to as “Ağaç Denizi” (lit. “Sea of Trees”). The modern appellation Ludogorie is a Bulgarian calque of Deliorman, introduced in 1950.

2 Introduction

being either forcibly deported to the Balkans or fleeing from Selim I's (r. 1512–20) and Süleyman I's (r. 1520–66) persecutions of “heterodox” and largely semi-nomadic Turcomans as perceived sympathizers, on Ottoman soil, of the newly founded (Shi‘i) Safavid Empire of Iran. While largely depopulated as of the late fifteenth century, Deliorman had a history of sheltering all kinds of religio-political dissidents² – it was from there that Sheykh Bedreddin, the great Ottoman religious rebel and reformer, incited his revolt against the dynasty in 1416.

Thus, as Deliorman and Gerlovo's countryside was being repopulated by groups potentially not quite amenable to the centralizing drive of the rising, sedentary, and increasingly self-consciously Sunni, Ottoman imperial bureaucratic regime, the Ottoman state undertook to encourage the growth of urban centers to strengthen its control over what was therefore an internal Ottoman “no man's land.” The most decisive development in this respect was the foundation of the city of Hezargrad (mod. Razgrad) in 1533 by the mighty grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, who provided for the town's rapid growth through the establishment of a richly endowed pious foundation (Ar. *waqf*; Tr. *vakıf*) which would finance the construction and maintenance of a congregational mosque, a *madrasa*, a soup kitchen, and other typical Ottoman (and Islamic) urban institutions that would turn the new city into a stronghold of Ottoman Sunni “orthodoxy.” Soon after its foundation, Hezargrad was made the center of a newly carved-out provincial district and equipped with a judge and the appropriate military-administrative personnel. Concurrently, Shumnu (also Şumnu, mod. Shumen) – a medieval Bulgarian fortress town to the southeast of Hezargrad which had been captured by the Ottomans in 1388–9 and destroyed by the crusaders of Varna in 1444 – was rebuilt and developed into an Ottoman provincial district center. By 1579, Eski Cuma (mod. Târgovishte), to the west of Hezargrad and Shumnu, had emerged as a new Ottoman provincial district center, to be recognized as a town by the Ottoman authorities in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Supporting urban development was not the only tool that the Ottoman central state utilized to bring the area under its control. Employing judicious, flexible, and accommodationist taxation policies, the state encouraged the gradual sedentarization and agrarianization of the incoming Turcoman semi-nomads and dervishes (and their immediate descendants). Most notably, it initially accorded them favorable tax exemptions and related privileges based on their status as semi-nomads and/or dervishes, which would gradually be withdrawn in the course of the

² “Deli-Orman”, *EI*².

sixteenth century. Thus, while at the turn of the century most of the Muslim residents in the countryside enjoyed one or another “special taxation status,” by 1579 the overwhelming majority of rural Muslims had been “tamed” and “disciplined,” having been converted to regular, sedentary, and mostly agriculturalist *re‘aya* (tax-paying subjects), with dervishes settled in convents and (supposedly) praying for the well-being of the dynasty. Similar policies applied to rural Christians; significant numbers of Christians from the area or brought in from elsewhere (usually with no previous permanent residence) were likewise gradually tied to the land.

The present work is thus essentially a double case study. On the one hand, it explores the formation of one of the most numerous, compact (and in this case, Turkish-speaking) Muslim communities in the Balkans; one characterized, moreover, by a very significant “heterodox,” non-Sunni element – the Alevi-Bektashis of today. It can thus be compared to other significant Muslim communities that developed elsewhere in the peninsula, such as those in Thrace, the Rhodope Mountains, Albania, and Bosnia. Arguing for a nuanced view of the formation of these communities, the present study emphasizes the importance of regional differentiation, as each of these communities followed separate trajectories that make the search for a common model precarious. In this regard, it explores the interplay between Turcoman colonization, conversion to Islam, the articulation of confessional identities, and Ottoman policies of centralization and regional development in the formation of the Muslim community in Deliorman and Gerlovo.

No less importantly, the present work is a regional case study of “the process of imperial construction”³ whereby from the mid-fifteenth through the sixteenth centuries the Ottoman polity made the definitive transition from a frontier principality to a centralized bureaucratic empire. In the process, groups that had played paramount roles in the rise of the Ottoman frontier principality, such as Ottoman frontier-lord families, semi-nomadic Turcoman warriors, and non-Sharia-minded dervishes, came to be gradually displaced and marginalized by the emerging imperial regime’s development of its institutional instrumentarium, which came to rely upon regular army units more tightly answerable to the center, a new military-administrative service class of largely *kull*/slave origin, a rapidly developing professional palace bureaucracy, and the rising *ulema* (Ar. *ulama*) class of *medrese* (Ar. *madrasa*)-trained religious

³ I borrow the phrase from Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1995), 31.

4 Introduction

scholars who endorsed scriptural, Sharia-minded Islam and would staff the Ottoman judiciary and educational system. The semi-nomadic Turcomans and “heterodox” dervishes in Deliorman and Gerlovo who were “tamed” by the late sixteenth century were very much descendants of those original “masters of the frontier zone” who had made formative contributions to the success of the Ottoman frontier principality, having acted as members of a power-sharing partnership with the early Ottoman dynasty. The study thus aims to demonstrate how this “process of imperial construction” played out in a distant province, highlighting also the changing balance between the “wanderers” and the “settlers” – i.e. the itinerants and the (semi-) nomads and the sedentarists, respectively – in the decisive favor of the latter, the triumph of the cereal/agricultural economy over pastoral nomadism, and the relationship between confessional/religious identity and imperial policy.

Both dimensions of the book as a case study – the rise of the Ottoman imperial centralized state and the formation of a regional Muslim community in the northeastern Balkans – may be situated in the wider Islamic world and Eurasian context. The past several decades have witnessed the articulation of conceptualizations of “early modern Eurasia” as a distinct zone, from Western Europe to East Asia, whose historical development from c. 1450 to c. 1800 represented a global moment in world history and was characterized by a number of “unifying features,” be they “parallelisms” or causally linked “interconnections.”⁴ Linking local or regional, contingent events and processes to macro-historical themes within the framework of evolving paradigms such as “integrative history” and “connected histories,” scholars such as Joseph Fletcher, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Jerry Bentley, and Victor Lieberman have elaborated upon a number of such unifying features: “a sustained movement from local fragmentation to political consolidation” that entailed a “drive towards centralization and the growth of coercive state apparatuses,” imperial expansion and the reformulation of ideas of universal sovereignty within the context of heightened apocalyptic and millenarian sensibilities (especially c. 1450–c. 1600), religious revival and reformations, large-scale migrations and overall population growth (c. 1450–c. 1550), rural unrest and the growth of regional cities, intensified exploitation of natural environments, technological diffusions

⁴ Joseph Fletcher defines “interconnections” as “historical phenomena in which there is contact linking two or more societies,” and “historical parallelisms” as “roughly contemporaneous similar developments in the world’s various societies,” *ibid.*, “Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period,” in *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia*, article no. X, ed. Beatrice Forbes Manz (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1995), 2–4.

and global cultural exchanges, and a generally “quickenning tempo of history.”⁵

Within the same interpretive framework, Charles Parker has highlighted the process of globalization of universal religious systems, especially Christianity and Islam.⁶ The early modern period witnessed the Islamic world’s significant expansion along its frontier zones, which entailed the formation of distinct new regional Islamic cultures. Beyond the confines of the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire, the formation of the Muslim community in early modern Ottoman Deliorman and Gerlovo may thus be productively compared to similar processes in other areas across early modern Eurasia such as Bengal and the lands of the Golden Horde.⁷ By providing a focused, regional perspective, the study aims to offer valuable insights on “the indigenization of Islam” – the process by which Islam, in its diverse doctrinal and socio-cultural manifestations, became part and parcel of a regional landscape; in this case, that of the Balkans.

Geographical Scope

The present study’s geographical scope is largely defined by the use of Ottoman tax registers that constitute the main source base for exploring demographic and socio-economic change. The area studied is a part of the northeastern Balkans that included the Ottoman districts (*kazas*) of Chernovi (mod. Cherven, Ruse province) and Shumnu in the eastern part of the Ottoman province (*sancak/liva*) of Niğbolu (mod. Nikopol)

⁵ This list of selected “unifying features” is based on my reading of the work of the scholars referred to. For a more detailed analysis, see Fletcher, “Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period”; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–762; Jerry H. Bentley, “Early Modern Europe and the Early Modern World,” in *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity: Individual and Community in the Early Modern World*, ed. Charles H. Parker and Jerry Bentley (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 13–31; and Victor Lieberman, “Transcending East–West Dichotomies: State and Culture Formation in Six Ostensibly Disparate Areas,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 463–546. For a concise, but insightful discussion of Ottoman empire building within this early modern Eurasian conceptual framework, see Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6–12.

⁶ Charles H. Parker, *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 183–206.

⁷ Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Türkles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). See also Rian Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

6 Introduction

as of the first decades of the sixteenth century,⁸ thus containing most of the historical-geographic region of Deliorman as well as Gerlovo (Ott. Gerilova) in its entirety.

This area thus stretches from the Danube River – roughly between modern Ruse (Ott. Rus, Rusçuk) and Tutrakan in the northwest to the Balkan range in the southeast – just to the south of modern Târgovishte and Shumen. At the northwestern end, along the Danube, lies a several kilometer-wide strip of flat land. Moving to the southeast, the larger part of the area studied is dominated by Deliorman – the hilly and wooded plateau roughly delineated by the Danube to the northwest, the Ruse-Varna line to the southwest, and the relatively arid steppe-like plain of Dobrudja to the east.⁹ With an average altitude of 300m, but reaching 485m, Deliorman, like the rest of the area under discussion, enjoys considerable yearly precipitation (around 550–600mm per year); however, due to its karst limestone and loess base, its aboveground water resources are limited, small creeks and rivers often losing their way in the loess sediments. This lack, at least in the pre-modern era, demanded the digging of wells and tapping of karst springs to ensure a satisfactory water supply.¹⁰ Until the nineteenth century most of Deliorman was covered by oak, ash, elm, and maple trees.¹¹

To the south of Deliorman rises the Shumen plateau as well as the hilly area around Târgovishte. The southernmost part of the area under discussion is occupied by Gerlovo – a hilly, fertile valley on the northern edges of the central-eastern Balkan range, formed by the Golyama Kamchiya (Ticha) River and a number of small tributaries.¹² With an

⁸ While the area under discussion as reflected in Ottoman tax registers remained roughly the same from the late fifteenth through the sixteenth centuries, the territorial-administrative divisions within this area did change with time. See section 4.2 in Chapter 4.

⁹ Wolfgang Stubenrauch, *Kulturgeographie des Deli-Orman (Nordostbulgarien)* (Berlin: Kommissionsverlag von J. Engelhorns Nachf. Stuttgart, 1933), 7–9. This definition of Deliorman's boundaries is largely based on the geomorphological features of the area. C. 1640 the famous Ottoman scholar Katip Çelebi defined Deliorman as the area between (or around) Shumnu (Shumen), Silistre (Silistra), and Hezargrad (Razgrad), Mustafa Ben Abdalla Hadschi Chalfa [Katip Çelebi], *Rumeli und Bosna, geographisch beschrieben*, trans. Joseph von Hammer (Vienna, Verlag des Kunst- und Industrie-Comptoirs, 1812), 38.

¹⁰ Stubenrauch, *Kulturgeographie*, 10–13; V. Marinov, *Deli-Orman (iuzhna chast): oblastno geografsko izuchvane* (Sofia: n.p., 1941), 27–36.

¹¹ While the region saw the conversion of some forest areas into arable land in relation to the growth of the settlement network from the early sixteenth century onward, deforestation intensified in the nineteenth century; nowadays most of the “Wild Forest” has been converted into arable land, the remaining forest consisting mostly of oak trees; Stubenrauch, *Kulturgeographie*, 13–19; Marinov, *Deli-Orman*, 45–48.

¹² Gerlovo is rimmed by the Balkan range to the south, the smaller Preslav Mountain to the north and northeast, and the Omurtag Heights to the northwest; V. Marinov, *Gerlovo: oblastno geografsko izuchvane* (Sofia: n.p., 1936), 5–12. C. 1640 Katip Çelebi defined it as the area between Shumnu and the Balkan range, thus not much differently from modern definitions; Hadschi Chalfa, *Rumeli und Bosna*, 38.

altitude of 250–400m and a temperate continental climate, it is differentiated from Deliorman mainly by its much richer aboveground water resources.

Thus delineated, the region under investigation roughly covers the modern Bulgarian provinces of Ruse, Razgrad, Shumen, and Târgovishte, as well as a portion of the modern Bulgarian province of Silistra (Ott. Silistre). A small part of Deliorman remains left out in the neighboring Ottoman province of Silistre. While the area described above is the main focus of the present study, frequent references will be made to other parts of the eastern Balkans, above all Thrace and Dobrudja, as they relate to both the demographic and religio-cultural aspects of early modern Deliorman and Gerlovo's development.

Early Modern Ottoman Deliorman and Gerlovo in the Scholarly Literature

The formation of the Muslim community in early modern Ottoman Deliorman and Gerlovo, like that of those in the eastern Balkans in general, remains little-researched. A few late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century demographic/ethnographic studies written by Bulgarian scholars who lacked the relevant training and access to Ottoman sources attempted to explain why northeastern Bulgaria was predominantly populated by Turks at the time of the proclamation of the Bulgarian principality in 1878. In an unfinished article, M. Drinov, relying mostly on Western narrative sources, traced the demographic development of northeastern Bulgaria up to the mid-sixteenth century, arguing that until the late fifteenth century the region was still largely populated by Christian Bulgarians, while for the sixteenth century he analyzed Bulgarian accounts of forced Islamization and ethnic assimilation now proven to be spurious.¹³ Other similar works do not throw much light on the history of the region, except in pointing to some interesting oral traditions.¹⁴

The first Ottomanist to advance a hypothesis about the origins of Deliorman's heterodox Muslim population – usually referred to as Kızılbaş (as well as Alevi-Bektashi) today¹⁵ – for which the region has

¹³ Marin Drinov, "Istoricheskoto osvetlenie vâruhu statistikata na narodnostite v iztochnata chast na bâlgarskoto kniazhestvo," *Periodicheskoto Spisanie* 7 (1884): 1–24, and 8 (1884): 68–75. On the so-called Bulgarian "domestic sources" on conversion to Islam, see the relevant discussion in Chapter 1.

¹⁴ Liubomir Miletich, *Staroto bâlgarsko naselenie v severoiztochna Bâlgaria* (Sofia: Bâlgarsko Knizhovno Druzhestvo, 1902); Stefan Bobchev, "Za deliormanskite turtsi i za kâzâl-bashite," *Sbornik na BAN* 24 (1929): 1–16; Vasil Marinov, *Deli-Orman and Gerlovo*.

¹⁵ *Kızılbaş*, lit. "Red Head(s)," is the designation accorded to the followers of the Safavid order in the time of the Safavid Sheykh Haydar (in office, 1460–88) who introduced the famous

8 Introduction

been well known in the modern age, was Franz Babinger – one of the founding fathers of Ottoman studies. He claimed, without adequate substantiation, that the Kızılbaş in Bulgaria, Deliorman included, were descendants of adherents of the “Safaviyya” (Ger. “Sefewijje”), which he seems to have conceptualized in the narrower sense of adherents of the Safavid order, but which could also be understood more broadly in the sense of sympathizers of the newly established Safavid regime in Iran (1501) who had fled from Anatolia in the context of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict in the sixteenth century.¹⁶ There the issue long rested, but later research on the revolt of Sheykh Bedreddin in the early fifteenth century and the letters of the judge of Sofia, Sheykh Bali Efendi, to the grand vizier and the sultan in the 1540s, which point to the presence of adherents of Bedreddin’s movement in Deliorman,¹⁷ has induced some scholars to assume that the heterodox population in the area largely had its origins in that movement, and not in the Ottoman-Safavid conflict.¹⁸ In the past few decades this view has been expressed in specialized studies as well as in general histories of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ Most recently,

twelve-gored scarlet cap (known as *taj-ı Haydari*) as the order’s common headgear. Through most of the sixteenth century, starting with Haydar’s son – Shah Ismail I (r. 1501–24) – the founder of the Safavid Empire of Iran, the term *Kızılbaş*, especially from the point of view of the Ottoman state and establishment, was used to refer to the Safavid dynasty, state, and Safavid subjects in general, but also to designate perceived supporters of the Safavid cause on Ottoman soil. The latter, however, were not necessarily strict adherents of the Safavid order’s theology and practices, but were those perceived as sympathetic toward the Safavid regime for a variety of reasons. For more details, see Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 6. On the modern usage of *Kızılbaş*, *Alevi*, and *Bektashi* as identity designations among heterodox Muslims in Bulgaria, see Hande Sözer, *Managing Invisibility: Dissimulation and Identity Maintenance among Alevi Bulgarian Turks* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

¹⁶ Franz Babinger, “Der Islam in Kleinasien,” *ZDMG* 76 (1922): 140.

¹⁷ See V. Minorsky, “Shaykh Bali Efendi on the Safavids,” *BSOAS* 20 (1957): 437–451, and Andreas Tietze, “Sheykh Bali Efendi’s Report on the Followers of Sheykh Bedreddin,” *OJA* 7–8 (1988): 115–122.

¹⁸ Note also T. Kowalski’s comments on the elements of Ponto-Caspian Turkic dialects found in the dialect spoken in the northeastern Balkans, thus highlighting the importance of pre-Ottoman Turcoman migrations from the Ponto-Caspian steppe, *ibid.* *Les Turcs et la langue Turc de la Bulgarie de Nord-Est* (Krakow, 1993). For more on these pre-Ottoman migrations, see Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.

¹⁹ For example, in A. Y. Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler (15.–17. Yüzyıllar)*, 4th ed. (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2013), hereafter *Zındıklar*, 196–197, 212–216, and H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 190; hereafter *Classical Age*. On the basis of modern ethnographic and anthropological evidence, F. DeJong has questioned Babinger’s thesis, arguing that the Kızılbaş of Deliorman must have their origins in “pre-Safavid” Kızılbaş sects [*sic*] in Bulgaria (by which he seems to mean pre-sixteenth century “heterodox” groups in the eastern Balkans) which could have undergone “Safavization” in the sixteenth century. Comparing the practices and beliefs of modern Kızılbaş-Alevi-Bektashi communities in Bulgaria to those of the Tahtacı tribe in eastern Anatolia (which he sees as having most faithfully preserved the traditions of the “Safavid Kızılbaş”) he concludes

Nevena Gramatikova, in several fine works devoted to the history of the heterodox Muslim communities in Bulgaria, emphasized the importance of the heterodox collectivity of the Abdals of Rum of Otman Baba (d. 1478) and his successors – the sixteenth-century saints Akyazılı Baba and Demir Baba (the latter being the great sixteenth-century regional saint of Deliorman) – for the formation of the heterodox Muslim communities in the eastern and specifically the northeastern Balkans.²⁰ Gramatikova also places the development of heterodox Muslim communities in the eastern Balkans in the context of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict and notes that these communities were in all probability augmented by the migration of Safavid sympathizers onto Ottoman Anatolian soil into the Balkans in the sixteenth century (which, in turn, affected these communities' nature).

However, none of the studies referred to above has specifically focused on Deliorman and Gerlovo, neither has any of them utilized a diverse enough spectrum of sources, including Ottoman administrative sources (especially tax registers), to provide a more detailed picture of the relevant processes of demographic, socio-economic, and religious change in the countryside.²¹ As for urban growth, one study of considerable scholarly

that, as heterodox groups in the Rhodope Mountains and Gerlovo “have more elements of ritual in common with the Tahtacı,” they are more likely to have their origins in the Safavid Kızılbaş, as compared to the “Kızılbaş” of Deliorman and Dobrudja; DeJong, “Problems Concerning the Origins of the Qızılbaş in Bulgaria: remnants of the Safaviyya?,” in *Convegno sul tema: la Shi'a nell'Impero Ottomano* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale Dei Linzei, 1993), 203–215, esp. 214–215.

²⁰ Most importantly, *Neortodoksniyat Islam v bălgarskite zemi. Minalo i sâvremenost* (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2011). Her analysis of Demir Baba's *vita* is the only in-depth and competent study of this source, but its focus differs substantially from the related analysis in Chapter 6 of the present work. In her work Gramatikova has not utilized any of the major sixteenth-century tax registers for Deliorman and Gerlovo. Demir Baba's mausoleum/convent complex is the subject of a couple of now-outdated articles, most notably Franz Babinger, “Das Bektaschikloster Demir Baba,” *Westasiatische Studien* 34 (1931): 8–93. Otman Baba, not a Deliorman saint *per se*, but critically important to the present study as he was the actual founder of the Abdals of Rum as a distinct dervish collectivity in the eastern Balkans and was Demir Baba's “spiritual grandfather,” is the focus of two good modern scholarly articles: Halil İnalçık, “Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of *Otman Baba Vilayetnamesi*,” in *ibid.*, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 19–36, and Nevena Gramatikova, “Otman Baba – One of the Spiritual Patrons of Islamic Heterodoxy in Bulgarian Lands,” *Études Balkaniques* 3 (2002): 71–102. Otman Baba has also received some attention in the works of Ahmet Yaşar Ocak and Ahmet Karamustafa, most notably Ocak, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Marjinal Süfilik: Kalenderiler (XIV–XVII. Yüzyıllar)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), hereafter *Kalenderiler*, and Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994).

²¹ One should note Machiel Kiel's “Anatolia Transplanted? Patterns of Demographic, Ethnic and Religious Changes in the District of Tozluk (N.E. Bulgaria), 1479–1873,” *Anatolica* 17 (1991): 1–29. This important article focuses on the small region of Tozluk, just to the west of Gerlovo, and deals with Turcoman settlement and colonization in the

10 Introduction

value is Machiel Kiel's article, which briefly sketches Hezargrad's rise in the sixteenth century as a center of "orthodox" Sunni Islamic culture, as opposed to rural surroundings already populated by large "heterodox" groups.²²

Overview of the Sources

The present study utilizes a wide array of mostly Ottoman sources which may be divided typologically into administrative, narrative, and legal.²³

By far, the most important body of Ottoman administrative sources is a series of *tapu tahrir* tax registers (*tapu tahrir defterleri*) for the area under discussion.²⁴ Compiled in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these registers survey tax-revenue sources, including land and agricultural produce in the countryside and taxable urban properties and enterprises (e.g. town markets, artisanal shops, or public bath-houses). They can be detailed (*mufasssal*) or synoptic (*icmal*). Detailed registers include the names of taxpayers (adult Muslim and non-Muslim males – married household heads or bachelors – but also those of non-Muslim, usually Christian, widows registered as household heads) as well as a detailed breakdown of tax-revenue amounts for each settlement. Taxpayers, together with their families, were defined as *re'aya* (lit. "flock"), and were registered separately by religious affiliation and by specific local community when relevant (e.g. a Muslim or Christian neighborhood in a town, but also nomadic or semi-nomadic groups). Some *re'aya* had special (privileged) taxation status usually related to some specific duties they performed (e.g. auxiliary military personnel of semi-nomadic provenance, mountain-pass guards, rice cultivators who acted as suppliers for the state, etc.).

Synoptic registers usually contain only summary household and bachelor numbers as well as the total tax amounts assigned for each settlement. Most of the land was defined as state-controlled (*miri*) and tax

countryside, thus complementing the present study. However, it is based almost exclusively on Ottoman tax registers and covers, in summary fashion, a much longer period.

²² Machiel Kiel, "Hrăzgrad-Hezargrad-Razgrad. The Vicissitudes of a Turkish Town in Bulgaria," *Turcica* 21–23 (1991): 495–569. Kiel places an emphasis on Hezargrad's architectural history, while also providing an overview of the town's demographic development, well-grounded in Ottoman tax registers; however, he does not utilize Ibrahim Pasha's important pious endowment charter (*vakfiye*) of 1533.

²³ Whereby such a distinction may not always be quite neat. For example, Ottoman law codes can be seen as legal-administrative sources. Unfortunately, Islamic court registers (*şer'iye sicil defterleri*) are not extant for the area of study and so have not been researched.

²⁴ The study also utilizes some tax registers for other areas in the Balkans, notably Thrace and Dobruja.