

*Part I***The Balkan economies during the Ottoman period to 1878**

The Balkan countries were not drawn into the main stream of European economic development before 1914. It is nevertheless common currency that even this most retarded of European regions was slowly modernizing, and that from the end of the nineteenth century, the hitherto infinitesimal tempo of change was speeding up, and resulting in slow, faltering, but still significant economic growth.¹ This book takes a different view. The Balkan economies were subject to a distinct evolutionary dynamic which was not intrinsically developmental, but this dynamic was overlaid in the different territories studied by changing institutional arrangements which temporarily caused performance to deviate from a long-run declining trend. The book is divided chronologically into two parts, the first covering the period from the 1790s to 1878, when most of the Balkan area except Serbia remained subject to Ottoman rule and institutions. Part II deals with the period 1878–1914, when Bulgaria and Bosnia had been prised from Ottoman rule. Emphasis shifts to examining the changes which took place under new institutional arrangements: in Bulgaria, like Serbia and Montenegro, under those of self-rule, in Bosnia as a dependency of Austria-Hungary.

In the period before 1878, it will be argued, Ottoman institutions, in particular agrarian arrangements, engrained themselves deeply into the organization of economic life. The institutions themselves were undergoing radical changes which had a profound effect on economic life and on its evolution, especially in Bulgaria.

In an overwhelmingly agrarian economy, changes in the density of settlement were bound to have far-reaching effects on economic change, so Chapter 1 identifies population trends and the distribution of population between urban and rural communities. For simplicity its content covers the entire period to 1914.

¹ The consensus is well defined in R. Preshlenova, 'Austro-Hungarian Trade and the Economic Development of Southeastern Europe before World War I', in *Economic Transformations in East and Central Europe*, ed. David F. Good (London, 1994), p. 232.

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Excerpt

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Chapter 2 examines the institutional evolution of Ottoman Europe, and the economic responses elicited in Bulgaria and southern Macedonia. Chapter 3 looks in greater depth at the outcome both for agriculture and manufacturing in Bulgaria. The evidence produced will indicate that the responses to improving opportunities were sufficiently strong and sustained for Bulgaria to become the most productive and dynamic of all the Ottoman territories.

This contrasts with the experience of Serbia, liberated since 1815 from Ottoman rule. Serbia (Chapter 4) became a country of universal peasant landownership and low taxation, a combination which resulted in an economy dominated by subsistence farming. So far from providing the basis for the free formation of capitalist mechanisms, Serbia, it will be shown, retrogressed economically, and chapter 4 explores why this retrogression occurred.

Pre-1878 economic trends in the dinaric zone, in Ottoman Bosnia and the then tiny Montenegrin state, form the subject of Chapter 5. Institutional arrangements in Bosnia differed from those in Bulgaria, as did the outcomes. The chapter attempts to analyse why this was so, and uses the sketchy evidence available for the period on Montenegro to bring out some characteristics of dinaric economic life which both (uneasily) shared.

Economic performance is ultimately determined by entrepreneurial response to changes in externalities. Chapter 6 explores economic aspects of the Bulgarian 'renaissance' of the mid nineteenth century, and contrasts the diffusion of an indigeneous Bulgarian enterprise culture with the near-absence of any equivalent culture in Bosnia or Serbia.

The Balkan economic experience in the period before 1878 provides the clues needed to understand performance between 1878-1914, as covered in Part 2. In particular it shows why it would be misleading to view the earlier period in Ottoman Europe as a phase of feudal stagnation. Rather, it will be argued, the removal of Ottoman rule led to deepening economic retardation, except in Bosnia, where a rather inefficient tyranny was exchanged for a more efficient one.

Of course, the Balkan countries were much more sophisticated institutionally in 1914 than they had been in the 1860s, but they were probably, with the exception of Bosnia, poorer and less productive. It is not argued that the institutions created by the new Balkan states were directly responsible for economic decline, but it is argued that those pertaining in the Ottoman lands before 1878 had provided a more effective offset.

1 Balkan population 1790–1914

Throughout the century before World War I, Balkan economic life was based on low productivity farming. Population growth would alter the relationship between land and population in a way critical to the evolution of the Balkan economies. As population trends for the Balkans have not yet been satisfactorily charted, we aim to establish a working estimate of Balkan population and its growth over the period 1790–1910.

Population trends in Ottoman Europe

The most serious gaps in our demographic knowledge concern the experience of the Ottoman provinces. These comprised 76 per cent of the peninsula (by area) till 1877–8, and 37 per cent subsequently. Nineteenth-century Ottoman population trends have been ‘a perplexing problem to students of modern Ottoman history’.¹ Properly speaking, the Porte did not enumerate the population, but from the 1830s onwards its system for registering population was subjected to periodic updating; it is these updates which pass for censuses.² The Porte appears to have revised its registers in 1831, 1835, 1838, 1844 and 1857, and probably in 1864. However, these revisions were not published, and several have yet to be rediscovered. Only one of these documents, which was begun in 1831, has been examined by historians, but even this is of limited usefulness. We know something of the contents of later revisions from information leaked to European observers who made their own estimates, but these varied widely. Different territories were registered at different times, areas would wholly or partly escape the count, and even within individual territories, registration was a protracted affair which could go on for years. Sins of omission, double counting and plain bad arithmetic were rife. Moreover, the authorities were primarily interested in identifying the

¹ Stanford J. Shaw, ‘The Ottoman Census System and Population 1831–1914’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* [*IJMES*] IX (1978), p. 325.

² Justin McCarthy, *The Arab World, Turkey, and the Balkans (1878–1914): A Handbook of Historical Statistics* (Boston, MA, 1982), p. 53.

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adult manpower population, or the number of taxable hearths, and this introduces problems in converting their figures into estimates of absolute population. The very dating of revisions is elusive since they were never intended to provide a snapshot of population at any precise date, and when new registers were released to replace older ones, the new statistics could be derived partially from old registers. The quality of the surviving material improves from the 1870s onward, but still leaves much to be desired. Recent research has been devoted to analysing some of the registers in static terms, most notably by Kemal Karpat.³

Our presentation of Balkan population trends is therefore subject to an indeterminate margin of error, and some statistics we have used could be misleading. Nevertheless, it is common ground among the historians, having warned of the shortcomings of the statistics, to proceed to a more favourable evaluation of their quality. The underlying figures were relied upon by the authorities for the vital purposes of taxing and ascertaining military strength, and some of the Europeans who used them knew enough about the Ottoman administrative system to draw reasonable conclusions from them.⁴ Thus it appears worthwhile to apply the estimates they made, for such purposes as do not require a high degree of accuracy.

In c. 1530 population in the Balkans was about 5.4 million (4.3 million within our reference area).⁵ The following three centuries have till recently remained a dark age for Ottoman population statistics. Hearth tax records suggest a continuous population decline from 1650 through to 1834,⁶ and contemporary comment did nothing to convey an alternative impression. For example, it was claimed in 1798 that 'without going farther back in time than the memory of persons now living, it is easy to prove that depopulation has been, at least in latter times, astonishingly rapid'.⁷ Stavrianos and Stoianovich treat the entire early modern period as one of plague-racked demographic decline.⁸

However, the hearth tax records lost their significance from 1691 when the basis of taxation was changed. McGowan analysed the registers

³ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914. Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wis., 1985); Karpat, 'Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/2-1893', *IJMES*, IX (1978).

⁴ Karpat, 'Ottoman Population Records', pp. 239, 240, 244.

⁵ Calculated from information in Omer 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*, I (1957-8).

⁶ Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule 1354-1804* (Seattle, 1977), p. 222. ⁷ W. Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (1798), p. 254.

⁸ Traian Stoianovich, 'L'économie balkanique aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Faculté des lettres, University of Paris, 1952), pp. 19-20; L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1958), pp. 134-5.

for the new *cizye* tax system, for 1700, 1718, 1740, 1788 and 1815, and concluded that the massive population fall experienced by the Ottoman Empire in the late seventeenth century was partially reversed during the eighteenth.⁹ *Cizye* was chargeable on all non-Muslim males of 15 years and over,¹⁰ or more precisely of 15–60 years of age.¹¹ McGowan estimates that men of this age group would constitute one in three of the population of a pre-industrial society, but this proportion may be a little high. Our calculations from the Serbian census of 1863 indicate that 29.3 per cent of villagers and 34.5 per cent of townspeople fell into the taxpayer category, in this 94.45 per cent rural country, or 29.5 per cent of the population (1 in 3.385). We lack information as to the Muslim population of the area, but Karpat's statistic for the elayets of Rumeli and Silistra from the 1831 census shows that Muslim males were 58.8 per cent as numerous as non-Muslim males. We will not go far wrong in applying the same proportions to McGowan's statistics. McGowan abstains from translating his *cizye* totals into explicit population estimates, since his purposes are served by demonstrating a trend rather than estimating absolute numbers, but he considers the records to be roughly reliable. The *cizye* figures for 1815 may not have been entirely up to date, especially for the Greek lands,¹² so to allow for omissions from the registers, an 8 per cent upward adjustment would probably be appropriate.¹³ McGowan's reference area includes the Dobrudzha which later statistics indicate had a population of 220,000 or about 2 per cent of that of our own reference area, and it excludes the Greek Aegean islands which had a population of 390,000 around 1850.¹⁴ As a result, we add a further 1.7 per cent to our revision of McGowan's basic material. McGowan's data and our estimates from it are set down in Table 1.1.

The next landmark is the registration of male population which began in 1831. A table of findings from the registers was published by Akbal in 1951, but large areas in Albania, Macedonia and Thessaly were largely or wholly excluded from the statistics, presumably because the records were lost.¹⁵ Territorially, male population has been grouped by Todorov as follows:¹⁶

⁹ Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe. Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 103. ¹⁰ McGowan, *Economic Life*, p. 82.

¹¹ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 20.

¹² McGowan, *Economic Life*, pp. 82–5.

¹³ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 10.

¹⁴ [E. Boré], *Almanach de l'Empire Ottoman pour l'année 1850, avec une statistique politique et religieuse...* (Galata, 1850) reproduced in Michoff, II (1924), p. 4.

¹⁵ Fazila Akbal, '1831 Tarihinde osmanli imparatorlugunda idari taksimat ve nufus', *Belletin*, XV (1951).

¹⁶ Nikolai Todorov, *The Balkan City, 1400–1900* (Seattle, 1983), p. 311.

Danube	477,862
Edirne	421,721
Salonica	240,411
Bitola	208,222
Total	1,348,216

Table 1.1 *Population of Ottoman Europe 1700–1815*

Year	<i>cizye</i> payers	Population estimate (000)
1700	635,835	3,755
1718	683,316	4,035
1740	756,949	4,470
1788	868,648	5,130
1815	932,322	5,506

Source: McGowan’s *cizye* figures multiplied here by 5.905, to allow for family members, Muslims, under-recording, deduction of Dobrudzha, and addition of the Aegean islands, see text p. 5.

These figures have been modified by Karpat, though as his total for Rumeli and Silistra elayets together is close to that of Akbal, the figures are still not credible in aggregate, for they imply an unrealistically small population for Rumeli of less than 3 million.¹⁷ The lost Ottoman revision of 1844 for the European provinces provided the basis for population estimates by Ubicini, Heuschling, Boré and Michelsen.¹⁸ Despite their common source, these writers differed widely in their estimates for the population of Ottoman Europe, and expressed their findings in round figure terms, which they defined to regions of indeterminate extent. All appear to have over-corrected grossly for what they knew to be problems of under-recording in the original documents. Ubicini estimated the population of Rumeli at 7.5 million, Boré at 5 million. Later observers agree that these figures were too high.¹⁹ If taken at face value, they would

¹⁷ It is not clear whether a full count was made of male children under the taxable age. See Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 20.
¹⁸ A. Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey* (tr. Lady Easthope, London, 1856), I, pp. 18–20; Xavier Heuschling, *L’Empire de Turquie* (Brussels, 1860), pp. 52–54; (Boré) *Almanach*, in Michoff, II (1924), p. 4; Edward H. Michelsen, *The Ottoman Empire and its Resources* (London, 1853), p. 47.
¹⁹ Engin Akarli, ‘Ottoman Population in Europe in the Nineteenth Century: its Territorial, Racial, and Religious Composition’ (MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972), p. 44.

show an implausibly rapid rate of population growth between 1815 or 1831 and 1844 followed by a sharp decline into the 1860s and 1870s. Karpat's view is that there was more or less continuous population growth throughout the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, and this certainly seems more probable.²⁰ A further (lost) revision of the registers was undertaken in 1857,²¹ though I know of no estimates composed from it. In Bosnia, which seems to have missed the count in 1831 and 1844, an enumeration was undertaken in 1851/2, which provides a reasonably solid figure.²²

After the Crimean War an increasing flow of material became available. Akarlı thinks a census (or updating of the registers) was taken in 1864. This seems to have provided a new crop of figures which were probably derived from calculations by Vladimir Jakšić, chief of the Serbian statistical department.²³ However, no trace of the document has been discovered, nor did Jakšić publish data directly from it. For the period 1864–76 we have disaggregated statistics for Danube, Edirne (Adrianople) and Bosnia vilayets, for which our sources give mutually compatible figures. However, the aggregative figures for Ottoman Europe as a whole vary unacceptably, mainly because of wild divergences in estimates for the areas comprised today by Albania, Kosovo, the Pindus and Macedonia. The authorities probably disposed few satisfactory records for these anarchic tribal areas because of the weakness of the local administrative machinery. In Table 1.2, we set out the most consistent evidence for the population of the various territories of Ottoman Europe.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina (which then included the sanjak of Novi pazar and territories seized in 1877–8 by Montenegro), population probably rose from 1.078 million in 1851 to 1.264 million in about 1875, that is to say, by 1.1 per cent per annum. McGowan's figures for Bosnia and part of the sanjak in 1815 (an area for which he regards the enumeration as sound)²⁴ show 114,230 *cizye* payers. This suggests a population of 675,000, and implies growth to 1851 at 1.3 per cent per annum. So the population estimate given by Chaumette des Fosses, of 1,074,000 at the end of the eighteenth century²⁵ looks exaggerated, and it is unlikely that Bosnia uniquely experienced no population growth during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Northern Bulgaria (Danube vilayet) and Thrace (Edirne vilayet) are more of a problem. Danube vilayet seems to have experienced sustained 2.1 per cent annual population growth between 1864 and c. 1875. Growth

²⁰ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 11. ²¹ Shaw, 'Ottoman Census System', p. 327.

²² Djordje Pejanović, *Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine* (Belgrade, 1955), pp. 29–30.

²³ Akarlı, 'Ottoman Population', p. 14. ²⁴ McGowan, *Economic Life*, p. 90.

²⁵ Stoianovich, 'L'économie balkanique', pp. 8–9.

2 Karpát, *Ottoman Population*, p. 116.

Table 1.2 *Notes (cont.)*

- 3 Ibid. p. 117.
- 4 Ravenstein, 'Distribution of Population', pp. 260–1.
- 5 Ubicini, 'L'empire Ottoman', p. 107.
- 6 Pejanović, *Stanovništvo Bosne*, pp. 29–30, 37, and table.
- 7 GBC Bosnia 1858.
- 8 Gustav Thömmel, *Beschreibung des Vilajet Bosniens* (Vienna, 1867), p. 102.
- 9 *Salname-i vilayet-i Bosna*, Defa V, sene 1287 (=1870) p. 144. This figure was repeated in several successive yearbooks, which is why it was used by Samo for 1872.
- 10 Ubicini and Courteille, *Empire Ottoman*, p. 19.
- 11 Extract from *Almanach de l'Empire Ottoman pour l'année 1850...* in Michoff, II (1924), p. 4.
- 12 Bowen, *Mount Athos*, p. 249.
- 13 Michelsen, *Ottoman Empire*, p. 139.
- 14 Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey*, I, p. 18.
- 15 Heuschling, *Empire de Turquie*, pp. 51–2.
- 16 Salaheddin, *Turquie*, p. 210.
- 17 Cammerer, *Handbuch*, in Michoff, II (1924), p. 70.
- 18 Karpát, 'Ottoman Population Records', pp. 258–74.

at this high rate was quite possible, because heavy immigration augmented natural increase. This immigration included numerous Bulgarians, as well as Tatars and Circassians who were driven from the Russian Empire. Of the Circassians alone, about 600,000 were resettled in the Balkans, mainly in northeast Bulgaria between 1860 and 1876, and the Tatar immigration may have been of comparable size.²⁶ Population in Edirne vilayet, on the other hand, was either static or falling between 1864 and 1875. Our main difficulty in setting these figures in a long-term trend is the dearth of satisfactory figures prior to 1864 with which to link them. For Edirne elayet in 1844, Ubicini gave a figure of 1.8 million, but Heuschling indicated that this included Constantinople and environs. Ubicini estimated Constantinople's population at 891,000, including 116,000 non-residents, but the enumeration of that year showed but 213,693 males resident in the city.²⁷ We therefore infer a population for Edirne elayet of 1.0–1.4 million at this time, and take a mean of 1.2 million.²⁸ For Northern Bulgaria, however, the only estimate which lies within the range of plausibility is Boré's, of 2 million (for 1844) but this is probably too high.²⁹ If we assume that the rate of population growth was similar to that of Bosnia (1.1 per cent per annum) then an 1851 population of 1.73 million is indicated.

²⁶ Karpát, *Ottoman Population*, pp. 64–9. ²⁷ Ibid., p. 203.
²⁸ G. F. Bowen, *Mount Athos, Thessaly and Epirus* (London, 1852), p. 249 estimates its population at 1,020,000, but his figures were in general implausibly low.
²⁹ Ubicini, Heuschling and Salaheddin all gave 3 million, and Michelsen 4 million, but these are as far outside the bounds of probability as Bowen's 560,000. Salaheddin Bey, *La Turquie à l'exposition universelle de 1867* (Paris, 1867), p. 210.

For the problem area of the southwest Balkans in the third panel of Table 1.2, we reason as follows. The 1881 revision indicated a population of 2.98 million and was reliable to within 10 per cent even in the remotest areas.³⁰ Territorial losses to Serbia and Montenegro had slightly reduced the population of this area since the previous revision. We should therefore be looking for a pre-1878 population somewhat in excess of 3 million. Thus the von Samo, Ubicini-Courteille, and Cammerer figures³¹ fall into the right range,³² implying that population in c. 1872 was of about 3.4 million. Most of the earlier figures are therefore improbably high, especially that of Salaheddin, which is widely regarded as exaggerated. The figure Behm attributed to Jakšić, stated to relate specifically to 1864, is obviously compatible,³³ as is that of Michelsen (presumably for 1844) an estimate which is much lower for the territory than that of Ubicini or Boré. If we take the southwest Balkans as having 3.08 million inhabitants in 1864 and 3.4 million in 1872, implying growth at 1.2 per cent per annum, then this growth projected backwards implies a population in 1844 of 2.41 million. This makes the Michelsen figure, if for 1844, the most acceptable estimate, which will therefore be adopted.

These are the figures which we will use as the basis of calculation. However, we must introduce two basic modifications, one to adjust for sex ratios, the other for general undercounting. The estimates we have quoted for total population were derived from registers of male population, whose numbers were doubled. These can be improved on, since all enumerations in the nineteenth-century Balkans which counted women showed male population to have been significantly in surplus. The censuses of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia of 1880 and 1884 showed a 4.05 per cent surplus of males,³⁴ and that for Bosnia in 1879 showed a surplus of 10.4 per cent.³⁵ The Greek census of 1861 showed a surplus of 7.1 per cent,³⁶ and the one true census taken in Montenegro in 1911 disclosed a

³⁰ Karpát, 'Ottoman Population Records', p. 56.

³¹ A. Ritter zur Helle von Samo, *Die Völker des Osmanischen Reiches* (Vienna, 1877) cited in Karpát, *Ottoman Population*, p. 117; A. Ubicini and Pavet de Courteille, *Etat présent de l'Empire Ottoman* (Paris, 1876), p. 19; A. A. Cammerer, *Handbuch der neuesten Erdkunde* (1875), cited in Michoff, II, p. 70.

³² The Ravenstein and the 1877 *Salname* figures seem far too low. E. G. Ravenstein, 'Distribution of the Population in the Part of Europe Overrun by the Turks', *Geographical Magazine*, III (1876), pp. 260-1; for *Salname* 1877 figures see A. Ubicini, 'L'Empire Ottoman, ses divisions administratives et sa population', *L'économiste français*, V-e année, II, 30 (28 July 1877), pp. 106-8.

³³ E. Behm, *Die Bevölkerung der Erde* (Gotha, 1875), cited in Michoff, II (1924), p. 28.

³⁴ *SGBTs*, I, 1909, p. 16.

³⁵ *Ortschafts und Bevölkerungs-Statistik von Bosnien und Hercegovina* (Sarajevo, 1880), p. 4.

³⁶ *Statesman's Yearbook*, 1865, p. 296.