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**POPULATION, SETTLEMENT AND ECONOMY
OF SERRES FROM THE LATE-BYZANTINE PERIOD
TO THE 19TH CENTURY ACCORDING TO LITTLE-KNOWN
OR UNUSED OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS***

Introduction

Late Byzantine Serres was evidently one of the most important cities of Macedonia. Emperors and Princes exerted themselves to bring this town under their control. The proud inscription of the Serbian Tsar Dushan still looks at us from the Serres castle high above us on the mountain. About the size of its population, about what kind of town we are dealing with, information appears to be lacking. Without it one can never get an idea of the size of the city's population and see its relative importance in comparison with other important towns in S.E. Europe. What we have is, for example, the remark of the highly learned Nikiphoros Gregoras (2:746.14) saying that (in about 1360) Serres was «a large and magnificent town (asty)». From the early-Ottoman period we have the remark of the widely travelled Burgundian nobleman Bertrandon de la Broquière, 1433, that «Leserez» was a «gros ville», which in English would be «quite a sizable town». The next written information is the description of the town and its population in the oldest preserved Ottoman census- and taxation register, Tahrir Defter No 3, from 1454/55, preserved in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. This register is one of the keys to find what we need¹.

* The writer likes to thank the Turkish authorities for allowing him to work in their archives in Istanbul and Ankara and the staff of these institutions for their unceasing and often unbureaucratic help. A word of thank should also go to the municipal authorities of Serres which made my stay in their town possible, pleasant and useful.

1. Previously this register has been wrongly dated as being from 1465. Detailed research of Michael Ursinus could establish that it was from 1453 and belonged to a whole series of registers made upon order of the young Sultan Mehmed II at the beginning of his reign. M. Ursinus, «An Ottoman Census Register for the Area of Serres of 859 H. (1454-1455)? A reconsideration of the date of composition of Tahrir Defteri TT 3», *Südost-Forschungen XLV*, (München 1986) 25-36. T.D. 3 has been published in Macedonian translation by Al. Stojanovski, *Turški Dokumenti za Istorijata na Makedonskiot Narod. Obfiren Popisen Defter od XV vek*, Tom 4, Skopje 1978. Stojanovski also published a useful book based on this and other Ottoman registers: A. Stojanovski, *Gradovite na Makedonija od krajot na XIV do XVII vek*, Skopje 1981. His reconstruction of the total populations of towns, using throughout the centuries and for all the different communities the formula of 5.5 inhabitants for each household

When narrative source fail we have to recourse to a different method. This is using the built-up surface of the town and multiply this surface with a theoretically established average number of inhabitants per hectare. According to the detailed map of the town and the castle of Serres as prepared by my late friend Nikos Nikolaos the old Byzantine town walls comprised a space in the form of an irregular square of 500 x 500 meter. The total area enclosed was 24 hectare but about 5 ha. have to be subtracted being much too steep to build on. Left over 19 ha. Very probable the build-up surface was even less. The most likely is 16 á 17 ha. By a concentration of 150 inhabitants per hectare, as was established on the basis of a vast documentation of comparable evidence by Roger Mols, we can estimate the actual population of 14th century Serres as 16 x 150 =2.400. With 50 to 100 soldiers in the hilltop castle we get to 2.500 inhabitants². If we assume that the area within the walls was very heavily build-up, with 200 inh. per ha. we even arrive at a total of 3.400, with soldiers: 3.500 inhabitants. For time and place this was big. However, comparable evidence suggests that we should modify these numbers considerably, to make them more correct. In the well-researched Roman Britain Hollingsworth arrived at a range of 50 to 150 inhabitants per hectare³. Russell gave a sample of 10 Crusader towns in the Levant, having 130 people per hectare as an average. He also gave a sample of 15 towns in the Western Mediterranean after the plaque. They range between 81 and 125 inhabitants per hectare⁴. If we use the most likely number of 120 inh. per hectare we arrive for late-Byzantine Serres at about 2.160 inhabitants. According to the oldest preserved Ottoman census for Serres and its district, T.D. 3 from 1454/55 (p. 163-173) we find a total number of 494 Christian households living in the old walled town. When we remember that all over Europe from the late 14th century till about 1460/70 populations did not grow but remained stagnant and than divide the theoretical 2.160 inhabitants by the 494 households of 1455 we arrive at 4,37 inhabitants per households, which looks very realistic indeed.

We can even get closer in comparing city surface and known number of inhabitants. This is the case with the formerly important Frankish port of Glarentza in the Morea. Since the early 15th century it is a deserted field of ruins. The town within the circuit of the ruined town walls measures 8,8 hectare. With the formula of 150 inhabitants per hectare this would give 1.320 inhabitants. For a number of towns in the Morea from the year 1391, however, we have the number of households as well. This is the list drawn up

and 4 inhabitants for each household headed by a widow is unacceptably high.

2. R. J. Mols, *Introduction a la Démographie historique des villes d'Europe*, Louvain 1955 (a three volume 'classic').

3. T. H. Hollingsworth, *Historical Demography*, London 1969, pp. 279-283.

4. J. C. Russell, «Late ancient and medieval populations», *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, N.S. 48/3, p. 60/63, 101, tables 66 and 100.

by Count Amadeus of Savoy in the mentioned year. In «La Clarence» we find 300 households⁵. This gives an average household size of 4.4 people, or again 1.320 inhabitants! We should add that other important towns in the Morea had roughly the same size as Glarentza: in 1391 Kalamata had c. 300 houses, in 1401 the Venetian base and harbour of Koron c. 380 houses etc.

Fourteenth century Serres was about as big as Athens, which also had 18 ha. build-up surface within its walls. Together with a garrison of a hundred men (as between 1397 and 1401 the Venetians had in Athens, or the Ottomans in 1521) this would give a total population of 2.300-2.500 inhabitants. In 1393 the Italian traveller Niccolo da Martoni estimated «a thousand houses». If correct this would give 4.200, 4.300 inhabitants, which is much too high. It would meant 240 inhabitants per hectare. Even the heavily build-up Constantinople suburb of Galata, with its narrow streets and very high houses only reached 200 p.h. It is much more likely that we have to understand Niccolo's estimate as impressionistic and take it to be about 800 real houses. This would give 3.400 - 3.500 inhabitants and is in accordance with what we know from elsewhere⁶.

To understand the real importance of medieval Serres and its place in the Balkans we should also compare it with the important medieval town of Pljerven on the plateau of North-Eastern Bulgaria. Pljerven was the seat of a bishop of the Patriarchate of Tirnovo. It had wide commercial contacts as shown by the coins of many foreign countries found during excavations, as well by the fact that an Armenian colony lived in the town, having its own church. The town became deserted in the course of the 17th century, when Rousse on the Danube had taken over all its functions. Medieval Pljerven has been excavated in its entirety. Although of impressive architecture it was very, very small. The walled town (with many fine churches) measured only 1.60 ha. The open town on the plateau, surrounded and protected on every side by steep cliffs, had four ha. In the heavily build-up walled town we might expect 500, or at most 600 inhabitants. Another 600 lived in the less densely built open town. Together Pljerven had 1.200, or 1.400 inhabitants at most.

However, because of its situation on a elongated plateau surrounded on almost all sides by unassailable cliffs, through its high town walls and architectonically rich churches the small Pljerven was nevertheless and imposing urban settlement. It might also be taken as representative for most of the medieval Bulgarian towns. The medieval fortress towns of Shoumen and Loveç, both bishop's residences in Northern Bulgaria, and also excavated entirely, were even smaller than Pljerven⁷. To place the town of Serres in a

5. A. BON, *La Morée Franque*, Paris 1969, Vol II, p. 691 and p. 602, plan 22.

6. Niccolo da Martoni is easiest accessible in: J.P.A. Van der Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople*, Vol 1, Leiden 1980, pp. 37-52 and II, pp. 614-618 (English translation).

7. For the excavation of Pljerven see the fine monography of V. Dimova, S. Georgieva and J. Zaimov, *Srednovekovnijat Grad Pljerven*, Tom I, Citadela na Grada, Sofia 1985.

much wider international context it would suffice to compare it with some of the biggest cities of Western Europe. For this purpose I have placed some city plans on one drawing, all represented in the same scale. With 540 hectare the German city of Köln/Cologne was the real urban monster. From the same order of magnitude was the Flemish metropolis of Gent, or the capital of Brabant, the city of Brussels. Paris was of the same order of magnitude, as was Novgorod in Northern Russia, where a good plan failed me at the place of working. Nicaea, the Laskarid capital was a city of size, at least judging by the size of its walls, still standing today. With over 100 hectare Utrecht, largest medieval city of Holland, was much smaller. The English capital city of London was of the same order as Utrecht⁸. Although important as main administrative and commercial centres they were much smaller indeed than Cologne or Ghent. Adrianople/Edirne and Serres, the second and third in size in the Byzantine Balkans, however, were of a totally different order and bring these place back to where they really belong. They may serve as an illustration of the low degree of urbanisation of South-Eastern Europe in general. In medieval Serbia the situation was rather similar. Belgrade, the capital and biggest city of the country under Despot Stefan Lazarević (1389-1427) covered only 16 hectare. Smederevo, the new capital of Serbia under Djurdje Branković was only 10 hectares⁹. But for time and place Serres was an important town and was so seen by its contemporaries. It was to remain so in the Ottoman period, when it grew into the one of the ten biggest cities of Turkish Europe.

Early-Ottoman Serres

Let us now go to the Ottoman period. Late Byzantine Serres had been a town of about 2.100-2.200 inhabitants, as stated above. In September of 1383 town was taken by treaty and its original population remained where it was, in possession of all its churches. Very shortly after the conquest, in the first years of Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid (1389-1392/93) the Governor-General of, Timurtaş Pasha, ordered the transfer of a sizeable group of Turkish inhabitants from Western Asia Minor (Saruhan) to Serres and its district. The Early Ottoman chronicles Anonymous-Giese, Aşıkpaşa-zâde, Mevlana Neşrî and Oruç Bey Edirnevî all mention this action, as did independently from them the Byzantine chronicler Chalkokondylas.

The Ottoman register, T.D. 3 from 1454/55, preserved in the Prime Minister's Ottoman Archive in Istanbul (hereafter: B.B.O.A.) has in Serres,

8. Many plans of European cities can be found in: L. Benevolo, *Die Geschichte der Stadt*, Frankfurt/New York 1990, chapter «Die mittelalterlichen Städte in Europa».

9. Many detailed plans of medieval Belgrade have been published in the excellent work of M. Popović, *Beogradska Tvrdjava*, Beograd 1982. For plans of Smederevo see: Sl. Curpić – Ev. Hadjistryphonos (eds.) *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans 1300-1500 and its preservation*, Thessaloniki 1997, pp. 132/35 and 208/11.

next to the original 494 Christian households 493 Muslim households, all living outside the old walled city. Next to the 494 Christian households, all living inside the old city walls around at least 24 churches, there were 493 Muslim households. The Muslims had to build their own mosques and convents outside the old city and did so from the very beginning. In 787, less than two years after the capture, Grand Vizier Candarlı-zade Hayreddin Pasha, completed a great congregational mosque outside the old town. It was to become known as the Cami-i Atiq, or Old Mosque. The year 787 runs between 12 February 1385 and 1 February 1386. To start the construction of a major building in September is very little likely. They would have begun the work in April of 1384 and completed the building in the summer of 1386. With a sufficient working force a building of the size of the «Eski Djami» of Serres can be done in two years. This means the new masters took their treaty very literally and did start to build at the earliest opportunity¹⁰. Another very early Ottoman building is the Zaviye (dervish convent) of Baha ud-Din Pasha. Its foundation charter was drawn up beginning March of 1388 points in the same direction as an Old Mosque. The charter of Baha ud-Din also contains interesting information as to where the leading people of Ottoman Serres had come from. Among those who signed the charter as witness we find several Hadjis from the city of Amasya in North-Central Anatolia, one from Kırşehir in the very centre of the land, a secretary from Inzik/Nicaea and several persons from Kayseri¹¹.

In 1455 Serres had in total 987 households. When multiplied with the low multiplier of the 14th-15th century, 4.4, we arrive at a total population of about 4.400 inhabitants, which for 50% was Muslim. This was to change in time but not fundamentally.

Professions in 1455

It is interesting to see that many of the Muslim inhabitants of the city have their profession mentioned below their name and patronym. In a rapid count we saw 27 tailors, 16 shoemakers (pabucc), 10 tanners, 10 saddlers, six hatters, five wool carders, some soap makers, helva makers, silk weavers, kettle smiths, a book seller, an architect, and a gold smith etc., altogether 33 different professions. Among the Christians no professions are mentioned but in an explicatory note it is mentioned that among them there were 36 Orthodox priests (Papaz) who were privileged. They did not pay the *şpence*, which was

10. In 1669 the inscription of the Eski Cami of Serres was carefully copied by Evliya Çelebi (*Seyahatnâme VIII*, Istanbul 1928, p. 130). For a study and comparison see F. Taeschner and P. Wittek, «Die Vezirfamilie der Gandarlızâde (14.-15. Jahrh.) und ihre Denkmäler», *Der Islam XVIII*, Berlin-Leipzig 1929, pp. 59-115, Serres on pp. 77-84.

11. For the vakfiye of Baha ud-Din see: T. Gökbilgin, *Edirne ve Paşa Livası*, Istanbul 1952, part II, pp. 221-225. See also Ev. Balta in her fine work: *Les Vakıfs de Serrès et de sa Région (Xve et XVIe s.)*, Athènes 1995, pp. 113-116.

25 Akçe per adult married male. They had written documents stating this privilege.

Population in 1530

The register T.D. 167 of 1530 (p. 64/65) gives 671 Muslim households in Serres, divided over 26 mahalles, or wards, and 357 Christian households in 29 wards, and a Jewish community of 65 households, altogether 1.093 households of which 63% was Muslim. The Christians had gone down noticeable, most probably by conversion combined with moving to other places. The coming of Jewish refugees from Spain around 1500 did not influence the composition of the city's population fundamentally.

Economy in 1530

The 1530 register gives no names of individual inhabitants but at the end of the enumeration of the mahalles and their inhabitants it also gives some inside view in the economy of the city. A total of 11 taxes were levied. One was the poll tax of the inhabitants of a village outside the town, which we distracted. Left over is the tax sum of 169.982 Akçe (aspron). No less than 109.066 Akçe came from the various levies on market activity, market inspection (ihtisab) and the public weighing house (kantar), or 64% of the total tax, pointing to a well-developed urban activity. Another big one was the tax called «monopolye», reflecting the importance of the local wine production. Some of the inhabitants of Serres engaged also in breeding pigs. The register gives a sum of 6000 akçe per year for this activity, but this sum also includes an unspecified amount taken as bride tax (resm-i <aruz). In the city were 17 water mills working (because of the insufficiency of water) only half a year and therefore paid only 30 Akçe per year per mill. The other taxes are so small that we shall ignore them.

Population in 1570

In the forty years between 1530 and 1569/70 considerable changes had taken place. Our source is the register T.K.G.M. 197, preserved in Ankara (Serres on folia 265b – 275b). By 1570 the Muslims had grown till 826 households but the Christians had declined further, to 320¹². The Jews had also declined, from 65 to 56 households. When calculated over the number of households (total

12. See M. Kiel, «Population growth and food production of 16th century Athens and Attica according to the Ottoman Tahrir Defters», in: *Proceedings of the VIth Cambridge CIEPO Symposium*. Istanbul-Paris-Leiden 1987, pp. 115-133, and: M. Kiel, «The rise and decline of Ottoman Boeotia, 15th-19th centuries (Remarks on the Settlement pattern, Demography and Agricultural production according to unpublished Ottoman Turkish census- and taxation records)», in: John Bintliff (Ed.) *Recent Developments in the History and Archaeology of Central Greece, Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of Boeotian Studies*, Bradford U.K. 1990. Oxford 1997 (BAR International Series 666), pp. 315-358.

1.202) the Muslims represented 69% of the total population. If, however, we calculate over the total number of adult males ('nefer' thus the population from above 13/14 years old) we arrive at a different picture. It is easily visible that the Christians and the Jews had more children than the Muslims. Among the Christians there were next to the 320 households 251 unmarried adult males, or 44% of the totals male adults. This is very high. The Jews had 41% but the Muslims only 26%. This difference might result from a different marriage patten, the Muslim marrying younger than the others but it also reflects a lower number of children. The adult males (above 13) in a population with many children have to be multiplied with 3,5 to find the approximate total population. In a community with fewer children one has to take the adult males 3 times to arrive at the total. Of course this is only a rule of thumb, giving an indication of the order of magnitude, not exact numbers. If we proceed this way we arrive for Serres at 59% for the Muslims, 35% for the Christians and 6% for the Jews. The expansion of Islam was largely caused by conversion to Islam. As the 1570 register is a mufassal, or «detailed» one, giving the name and patronym of each registered person we can also establish more or less the importance of the factor conversion to Islam. In 1570 no less than 378 heads of Muslim households, or 48% had no Muslim fathers. In other words they were recent converts. This number is very high and asks for interpretation.

The numbers from 1570 are exceptional in several ways. In the 16th century large parts of the Ottoman Empire saw a vast population increase. Many provinces doubled their population, the Central Greek provinces of Attica and Boeotia they even trebled) Sarajevo rose from 153 households in 1489 to 970 households in 1516, and 3.679 in 1570, making it one of the largest cities of the Balkans¹³. Serres, on the other hand, grew very, very slow, from 987 households in 1455 to 1.093 in 1530 and 1.202 in 1570. How to explain this slow growth? Maybe the endemic malaria from the swamps around Lake Tachianos kept the population down, as malaria does. The same happened in the lowlands of Upper Thrace, around Philippople/Plovdiv, and Tatar Pazardaik, with their extensive rice fields. In the beginning of the 20th century rice growing was discouraged in the Plovdiv area, precisely under the argument that it caused malaria¹⁴. The once extensive rice fields around Plovdiv are now entirely gone.

13. For these numbers and more details see: H. Mabanović, «Postanak i razvoj Sarajeva», in *Radovi Naučno Društvo N.R. Bosne i Hercegovine, Odeljenje Istorisko-Filološki Nauka*, Knj. 5, Sarajevo 1960, pp. 71-115; and: B. Zlatar, «Mirenje Islama i Islamska Kultura u Sarajevu i Okolini», *Prilozi ze Orijentalnu Filologiju*, 41, (1991) 253-267.

14. For the impact of malaria on the demography of Upper Thrace see: M. Kiel, «TATAR PAZARCIK. The Development of an Ottoman Town in Central-Bulgaria or the Story of how the Bulgarians conquered Upper Thrace without firing a shot», in: Klaus Kreiser, Christoph Neumann (eds) *Das osmanische Reich und seinen Archivalien und Chroniken, Nejat Göyünc zu Ehren*. Istanbul 1997, pp. 31-67.

The Ottoman tahrirs of the 16th century mention rice growing in the Serres area and a number of rice growers (Çeltükdjis) as inhabitants of the city. However, this is but a suggestion. Other may have a better answer. At any rate, the towns in the vicinity of Serres but not situated near swampy areas, Nevrokop and Drama, did grow. Nevrokop grew from 277 households in 1455 to 666 in 1530, Drama from 207 in 1455 to 333 in 1570.

3) *Economy in 1570*

The last two pages of the registration of Serres in the 1570 register (fol. 275a/b) again gives a look into the city's economy. Disregarding the poll tax the ispençe and some smaller revenues of markets outside Serres itself we have a total tax of 343.546 Akçe on economic activity. There were now 35 water mills in Serres, still working half a year for 30 Akçe per year each. This is double the number of 1530 and is a good indicator of economic expansion. The greatest item was now the new rice fields, made possible by digging new canals for irrigation. The «*Enhâr-i Çeltük-i nehr-i Ab-i Cedîd*» yielded yearly 183.330 Akçe, or 53% of the entire tax load. Market dues, market inspection and public weighing house yielded 112.000 Akçe, or 33% of the total. Third came the taxes related with wine production, 26.000 Akçe, or 7.5% of the total. Interesting is the tax revenue of the New Hamam of Serres, good for 5.633 Akçe or one and a half percent. The Bozahâne was still there, now producing 4.333 Akçe as tax, or a humble one percent. Even less important was the agricultural production of inhabitants of the city, 1.600 Akçe of just a half percent. Were the Late-Byzantine towns often heavily engaged in agriculture the Ottoman town was based on crafts and commerce¹⁵. The 1570 register also gives many names of professions, where the great number of tanners immediately strike the attention. Our later sources do not give details on the city's economy. They come again with the temettüat defters of 1845, but for Serres they have not yet been found.

The Late-Ottoman Period

Population in the 17th century

For the following centuries the information is scant. We were able to trace a few data from the registers of the poll tax (Dzizye). For 1645/46 the Christian population of the city of Serres was registered as 531 «hâne»¹⁶). The latter word is usually taken to be identical with actual household and in the time before the mid-17th century was indeed. Than changes took place of which we know

15. For the agricultural aspect of the Late-Byzantine towns see for example A. Bryer, «The Structure of the Late Byzantine Town: *Diokismos* and the *Mesoi*», in: A. Bryer and H. Lowry (eds.) *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society*, Birmingham 1986, pp. 263-279, esp. p. 272 and the literature mentioned there.

16. See: E. Grozdanova, *B/lgarskata Narodnost prez XVII Vek*, Sofia 1989, p. 297.

little. In a number of occasions the State needed more money and did this by taking the adult but unmarried males also in the poll tax. If this was the case in Serres it would mean that about 25% of the 531 «hâne» should be deducted to come close the actual households number of the Christian community. The actual number of Christian household would thus have gravitated around 400 households. For the year 1651 we have 515 Dzizye hâne, or maybe 380 actual households¹⁷. Of course this is nothing more than a learned estimate.

In the course of the 17th century the population of many Ottoman Balkan towns apparently sank, or at least stagnated. Yet this decline is debated among Ottomanists. The slowly declining population of the town is illustrated in a «Detailed Register of the of the Extra-ordinary Levies for the Divan and Usual Obligations (<avâriz-i divâniye ve tekâlif-i <örfiye)>» for which a separate administration had been set up. This is the register Kepeci 2786, Mevkufât 240 in the B.B.O.A., dating from H. 1109 (A.D. 1698). Those writing about the town previously have not used it.

In 1698 the city had 31 Muslim quarters (mahalle) but only 6 mahalles of Christians. Here a main re-shuffle had taken place. The register deals with the Extra-Ordinary Levies and Customary Duties (Avariz-i Divâniye ve Tekâlif-i Örfiye) and apparently registers the entire number of households living in the city¹⁸. These include members of the administration and the religious class, the Cadi, Imams, Muezzins, Sheikhs of dervish convents, as well as various members of the military, Sipahis, Janissaries etc. Most of these groups are usually not mentioned in the Tahrir defters of the 15th and century. In 1698 Serres had 836 households (1570 1.202). Of them 591 were Muslim, 222 Christian and 23 Jewish. The city's population was thus for 71% Muslim if calculate over the number of households. As the Avâriz Defters do not register the unmarried we cannot see if there was a difference in family size among the various groups. It seems certain, however, that the Christian community, if compared with 1642 and 1651, had eroded further. Avariz Defters, however, do register truncated households headed by widows, in our case 88 in all, partly Muslim, partly Christian. The first mahalle of Serres mentioned in the register is the Mahalle of Bedreddin, the famous heretic and revolutionary of 1418. It was entirely Muslim and contained 41 households. 22 of them were ordinary Muslim re'aya, 19 were counted as belonging to the Askeri (Military) class and did not pay Avâriz. Among these 19 and seven «dul hatun» widowed ladies/women» When we take the 836 households as containing 4.4 individuals and add a child or two to the widows we arrive at a town of around 4.000 inhabitants.

17. See Sofia, National Library, Orientalski Otdel, F.Ch.16/29.

18. For this important tax and its administration and development see the article «Awârid» in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, and in detail in L. Darling, *The Ottoman Finance Department and the Assessment and Collection of the Cizye and the Avariz Taxes, 1560-1660*, Diss., Univ. of Chicago 1990 (also in print, with a slightly different title).

Experienced Ottomanists like Prof. Feridun Emecen of the Istanbul University maintain (in private discussions) that the urban poor below a certain property level were not taxed and therefore do not appear in the Avariz registers. He even goes to 25 or 30% untaxed and unregistered poor. If this is the case than late-17th century Serres would have had only 5.300 to 5.500 inhabitants, or as much as hundred years earlier.

The Muslim Population of Serres in 1831

The last sets of data about the population of Serres are the returns of the first «modern» census in the Ottoman Empire, from H. 1246, 1831. This is «Ceride Odası 24, GS No 39899» in the B.B.O.A. It is a large size 44-page register written on thick and solid paper. The census was carried out in two months between 1 Djemazi ül-Evvel and 27 Djemazi ül-Ahir of 1246 (medio November 1830 – medio February 1831). The heading at the beginning of the text writes: «Derun-i nefis-i Siroz mahallât-i Müslemin mevcud olan ehl-i Islam gerek yerlü ve gerek iskân üzere olan yabancıları defteridir», or: Register of the local Muslim population of the Muslim quarters of the town of Serres and the (Muslim) strangers who for work are present in the town. There were 24 Muslim mahalles in the city. The male inhabitants of each mahalle are split out in three groups: the local Muslims, the strangers, and the Descendants of the Conquerors (Evlâd-i Fatihân). These three groups are again split out in three groups according to age. We find the group of Old Ages, Strong, and Children. Each person is mentioned by name and patronym and has his age written below him. Even the smallest child of one or two months old is mentioned. One was counted as child up to the age of 13 and as old man after 45 years of age. The register only deals with the Muslim inhabitants of Serres. This means that for the Christians and the Jews separate registers were made, which we did not (yet) localised.

According to the register the Islamic population of the mentioned 24 Muslim wards of Serres in the year 1830/31 was composed of 1.217 locals, 259 strangers and 73 Evlâd-i Fatihân, in total 1.549. Besides them there were several groups with a special status: 34 men between 22 and 45 years old serving the Governor of the city, a force of 19 horsemen, between 22 and 45 years old and 19 other of the same age serving the poll tax collector (Cizyedar), 69 men guarding the gates of the town and supervising the market (between 18 and 60 years old), 37 servants of Osman Bey, most probable a local grandee, and finally 20 student in the Medrese of the Altunlu Mosque. Except the students almost all these men must have been married and had families. The total number of individuals must thus have been 1740/50. As the female part of human society is about half of the total we come to 3.500 Muslims. This is very low and if correct would mean that after 1698 the town's Muslim population did hardly grow. It was even lower than the peak in 1570. In the year 1570 as well as in

1698 the Christians of Serres made up about a quarter of the total population. According to information of travellers and official Ottoman numbers this was the same in the 19th century (see *infra*). This would mean that in 1830 Serres had a total population of about 4.600 inhabitants.

The way the 1830/31 register is build up allows us to make a population pyramid, something that is impossible with the older manners of registration. This may also help to find an answer for the very low total population. I made two samples, a large one of 500 individual and a smaller one of 130 people. Both pyramids show from the age of 40 years upward the normal pyramid pattern. It also shows in an irrefutable manner that a decade or so before something terrible must have happened, an epidemic of plague or the like, taking away whole generations of young people. Detailed research of mortality cause by plague in England has shown that the decease has a marked preference for boys in their most tender age. Although our two samples cover only one third of the population in question the general picture cannot have been very different. Serres had an old population with more people between 40 and 50 years than children, who should have been the vast majority.

Comparison and Conclusion

We now shall compare the official Ottoman population numbers with those of some travellers of the early 19th century and some official Ottoman numbers from the end of the same century. The difference is a small sensation.

In the first decade of the 19th century William Martin Leake estimated the population of Serres as ranging around 20.000 people. 15.000 Turks and 5000 Greeks mixed with a few Jews¹⁹. A few years before him the French Consul of Thessaloniki, Felix Beaujour, also a widely travelled man, has an even higher estimate: 25- 30.000 inhabitants of whom 12.000 – 15.000 Turks, the remainder «Christians and some Jews»²⁰.

Around 1890 another widely travelled and well experienced man like the German anthropologist Gustav Weigand estimated the population of Serres at about 20.000 inhabitants. 11.000 of them were Turks, 6.000 Greeks, among whom was a considerable part Hellenised Bulgarians. Next to them were 3.000 Bulgarians but, to complicate matters, a part of the considered themselves to be Greek. The follows a group of 2.500 Aromuns (Vlachs) and 1.500 Jews²¹. The Late Ottoman Dictionary of History and Geography, *Kâmûsu'l-A'lâm*, mentions as public buildings 29 mosques, 11 medreses, three imarets, 15 tekkes, a library of 2.000 volumes and adds rather laconically that the «the population is for the half Muslim, the others half are Bulgarians, Greeks and Jews»²².

19. *Travels in Northern Greece*, III, p. 200.

20. *Voyage Militaire dans l'Empire Ottoman*, Paris 1829, Vol I, p. 217/18.

21. G. Weigand, *Die Aromounen*, Leipzig 1895, p. 225/32.

22. S. Bey, *Kâmûs*, Istanbul 1306 [1888/89] vol IV, p. 2755.

At the beginning of the 20th century the official Ottoman Yearbook of the Vilayet of Selanik (*Salnâme Selanik Vilayeti*) has in the town of Serres had 4.416 houses 36 mosques, 16 mesdjids, three imarets, like the Kamus also 15 dervish convents and 11 medreses. The large number of dervish convents illustrates Serres' importance as Islamic religious centre. Furthermore 14 primary schools (*mektep*) for Muslim children, nine Christian schools, 21 churches, two synagogues and one library. The number of houses of the town would indicate a population 20 - 22.000 inhabitants, depending on the multiplier one takes. (4.6 or 5 individuals per household).

In 1900, according to the statistics of Vasil K/npov, that are by most researchers are accepted as about the best there are, Serres had 12.400 Muslim inhabitants, 11.000 Greeks, 2.500 Jews, and 2.200 Bulgarians²³. Altogether thus 28.100 inhabitants. How to explain these contradictory numbers is not clear to me. I would be pleased to hear more of our Greek colleagues about Greeks statistics for the last decades of the Ottoman period. According to the Ottoman statistics made just before the Balkan Wars, the province (*Sandjak*) of Serres had 225.000 inhabitants of which 130.000 were Muslims (58%), and 126.000 Christians, among which were «Bulgarians, Greeks and Vlachs».

How to interpret the enormous difference in numbers in the censuses and in the accounts travellers? Did the Serres population in 70 years treble? Or are the travellers' estimates far besides the mark? It remains our major question.

Finally we would like to conclude that Early-Ottoman Serres had a population twice as high as the Late-Byzantine town. We can also say that in the 16th century Serres grew exceptionally slow and that in the early 19th century the city was much smaller that suggested by the various travellers. In spite of its relatively small size was a centre of Islamic culture. The town produced a long list of Ottoman poets and writers and was the place where famous scholars worked. The presence of a convent of the highly sophisticated Mevlevi dervish order in Serres is another indication for the quality of Islamic culture in the town. Because of the execution and burial of Sheikh Bedreddin Simavi in 1418 Serres was a sort of «holy city» for heterodox Islam and as late as the 19th century poems were written in praise of the «Shah of Serres». In the 17th century a widely travelled man like Evliya Çelebi placed Serres among the «ten most important cities of the Balkans». Last but not least, Serres still possesses some 15th and 16th century buildings that belong to the most important monuments of Ottoman architecture of the Ottoman Balkans²⁴.

23. V. K/npov, *Makedonija Etnografiya i Statistika*, Sofia 1900, (reprint in his *Izbrani Proizvedeniya* vol II, Sofia 1970, p. 476.

24. For the Ottoman poets of Serres see: E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, (6 vols), II, London 1902 (reprint 1965) pp. 71-73 and 78 vv. Joseph von Hammer, *Geschichte der osmanische Dichtkunst*, vol II p. 401 (Hafiz -i Sirozi), 506 (Kabûli) 540 (Nesari), 552 (Niyazi) etc. The 16th century *Tezkere* of Latifi also has several poets from Serres (Sa'ati,

It was an intense pleasure to see that the restoration and reconstruction of great Mosque of Gedik Ahmedpaşa-oğlu Mehmed Bey finally materializes, especially for a person who saw it at the verge of collapse almost forty years ago and dedicated one of his first studies to it.

Serres, Population according to the Ottoman Census of 1830 (B.O.A.,D. CRD/24, GS No 39899)

sample of 500 individuals:

65 Years and older	xx
51 - 65 Years	xxxxxxxxxx
40 - 50 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
21 - 39 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
14 - 20 »	xxxxxxxxxx
7 - 13 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
1 - 6 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Sample of 130 individuals

65 Years and older:	xx
50 - 65 Years	xxxxxxxxxx
40 - 50 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
29 - 39 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
14 - 20 »	xxxxxxxxxx
7 - 13 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
1 - 6 »	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

who wrote several works on stylistical problems, on the Persian language, on riddles and also wrote poetry. The 17th century historian Hibri Efendi lived and worked in Serres and was buried there at the no longer existing Muslim cemetery Hisarardı (Behind the Castle). For the Ottoman monuments of the city see: R. Anhegger, «Beiträge zur Osmanische Baugeschichte III, Moscheen in Saloniki und Serre», *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 17 (1967) 312-324; and: M. Kiel, «Observations on the history of Northern Greece during the Turkish rule historical and architectural description of the Turkish monuments of Komotini and Serres, their place in the development of Ottoman architecture, and their present condition», *Balkan Studies* 12,2 (Thessaloniki 1971) 415-462 [updated version in M. K. *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans*, Aldershot (Variorum) 1990]. For reproductions of old photographs of Ottoman monuments see: G. Kaftantzi, *Istoria tis polemos Serron kai tis perifereias tis*, Thessaloniki 1996.

Serres in 1569/70
The Mahalle Names and Household Numbers
according to T.K.G.M. No 197, Ankara, fol. 265b – 275b

<i>Mahalle Name</i>	<i>Househ.</i>	<i>Unmarried</i>
Male Muslim Inhabitants		
Arab Hatip Mah.	40	4
Ayşe Hatun Mah.	32	5
Bacdar Hayreddin Mah.	28	4
Bedreddin Bey Mah.	26	11
Cami-i Kebir mah.	13	7
Çeşnegir İlyas	32	10
Darb-Hâne Mah.	60	15
Debbağ Murad Mescid Mah.	33	12
Doğan Bey Mah.	48	5
Esmâ (Eslima) Hatun Mah.	24	33 (!)
Evrenos Bey İmaret mah.	39	8
Hacı Ali Mah.	25	16
Hacı Kurd Mah.	41	23
Halil Paşa Mah.	41	25
Haraccı Muhieddin Mah.	39	16
Hazinedar (Cizyedar) Mah.	25	17
Hekim Davud Mah.	40	14
Hüseyin b. Keyvan Yusuf Mah.	27	14
İmaret-i Mehmed Bey b. Ahmed Paşa Mah.	45	7
İsmail Bey Mah.	11	7
Kara Hamza Mah.	10	1
Kemal Çelebi Mescid Mah.	26	16
Musa Çelebi (Kemancı) Mah.	18	1
Süleyman Bey Mah.	25	5
Tanrı Vermiş Hacı Mah.	26	10
Tatar Hatun Mescid Mah.	52	7
TOTALS	826	293

The Male Population of Serres according to the Register
«Ceride Odası» 24, GS No 39899 from 1830/31

<i>Name of Mahalle</i>	<i>Old Age</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Childern</i>
Arap Hatip Mah.	29	15	35
Ayşe Hatun Mah.	15	8	8
Bacdar Hayreddin Mah.	29	25	38
Bedreddin Bey Mah.	33	17	22
Cami-i Atik Mah.	13	14	12
Ceşnegir (Ç) İlyas Mah.	24	6	8
Cizyedar Mah.	33	21	29
Debbağ Murad Mah.	18	20	16
Doğan Bey Mah.	41	27	45
Esmâ Hatun Mah.	52	47	56
Gazi Evrenos Mah.	45	22	40
Hacı Ali Mah.	24	20	31
Halil Paşa Mah.	28	17	22
Haracı Muhieddin Mah.	20	12	28
Hekim Davud Mah.	36	23	23
Inebahtı Kastelli Muhacirleri	7	6	11
Ismail Bey Mah.	8	8	16
Kara Hamza Mah.	10	5	14
Kirişçoğun ? Mah.	21	6	27
Musa Çelebi Mah.	17	19	14
Süleyman Bey Mah.	11	6	10
Tanrı Verdi mah.	20	12	9
Tatar Hatun Mah.	50	36	41
Yenice Mah.	9	9	10
Two special groups	0	15	0

Total pop. According to register:

Local			Strangers			Fatihân		
<i>Old</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Child.</i>	<i>Old</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Child.</i>	<i>Old</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Child.</i>
492	280	445	79	99	81	18	23	32

Households and Population of Serres 1380 – 1990

<i>Year</i>	<i>Muslim Hh. Househ.</i>	<i>Christ. Househ.</i>	<i>Jew. Hh.</i>	<i>Total Popul.</i>	<i>Percentage Muslim</i>
1380	0	490	0 ?	2.160	0
1455	493	494	0	4.400	50 %
1530	617	367	65	4.820	63 %
1570	826	320	55	5.670	59 %
1698	591	222	23	4 - 5.000	71 %
1830	3.500 Inhab. Musl.	1.100 Chr.		Tot. 4.600 ?	75 %
1900	12.500 Inh. Musl.	13.500 Chr.	2.500 Jews.	Tot. 28.100	43 %

Research and Design M. Kiel, 2006

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

MACHIEL KIEL

Η ΠΟΛΗ ΤΩΝ ΣΕΡΡΩΝ ΑΠΟ ΤΟ 15^ο ΕΩΣ ΤΟ 19^ο ΑΙΩΝΑ ΣΥΜΦΩΝΑ ΜΕ ΕΛΑΧΙΣΤΑ ΓΝΩΣΤΑ ΟΘΩΜΑΝΙΚΑ ΔΙΟΙΚΗΤΙΚΑ ΑΡΧΕΙΑ ΠΛΗΘΥΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑΣ

Ένας τεράστιος αριθμός οθωμανικών διοικητικών πηγών είναι διαθέσιμος σχετικά με τη δημογραφική και οικονομική ιστορία της πόλης των Σερρών και της περιοχής της. Με κάποιες από τις πηγές αυτές έχουν ασχοληθεί Γιουγκοσλάβοι μελετητές, με κάποιες άλλες Έλληνες Οθωμανολόγοι και πρώτη από όλους η Ευαγγελία Μπαλτά. Ωστόσο, ο όγκος του υλικού παραμένει αδημοσίευτος.

Πηγές που χρονολογούνται από το τέλος της βυζαντινής περιόδου, σχετικά με το μέγεθος του πληθυσμού και την οικονομία του, δεν είναι γνωστές, τουλάχιστον σε εμένα. Για να έχουμε μια άποψη για το σχετικό μέγεθος και τη σημασία της πόλης των Σερρών στο δεύτερο μισό του 14^{ου} αιώνα, πρέπει να καταφύγουμε σε κάποιες καθιερωμένες μεθόδους αναπαράστασης του πληθυσμού που βασίζονται στην τότε οικοδομημένη επιφάνεια της πόλης. Μια σύγκριση με άλλες πόλεις της ηπειρωτικής Ελλάδας ή των βουλγαρικών και σερβικών εδαφών της ίδιας περιόδου, θα είναι εξίσου πολύ χρήσιμη.

Αρχίζοντας από το έτος 1465 και σε ολόκληρο το 16^ο αιώνα μέχρι και το 1570, έχουμε έναν μεγάλο αριθμό πηγών οι οποίες δίνουν μια συνεχή εικόνα του μεγέθους και της σημασίας των πόλεων της Βόρειας Ελλάδας και της οικονομικής τους ανάπτυξης.

Για την επόμενη περίοδο, το 17^ο και 18^ο αιώνα, το υλικό το οποίο είναι διαθέσιμο είναι λιγότερο λεπτομερές, ενώ επίσης μετά βίας έχει ασχοληθεί κανείς με αυτό. Ό,τι είναι διαθέσιμο θα παρουσιαστεί σε αυτή την εισήγηση. Για το 19^ο αιώνα βαδίζουμε και πάλι σε σίγουρο έδαφος, διαθέτοντας κάποια πολύ λεπτομερή αρχεία απογραφής πληθυσμού από τη δεκαετία του 1840. Αυτή η έως τώρα αχρησιμοποίητη πηγή υλικού μπορεί επίσης να χρησιμεύσει ως εργαλείο ελέγχου της αξιοπιστίας των συχνά μπρεσιονιστικών περιγραφών των ταξιδιωτών από την Ανατολή και τη Δύση.

Σε αυτή τη σύντομη επισκόπηση θα παρουσιάσουμε τις πηγές και θα σχεδιάσουμε τις κύριες γραμμές της δημογραφικής ανάπτυξης και της οικονομίας της πόλης των Σερρών, ενώ εξαιτίας της φύσης των πηγών, θα πρέπει να περιορίσουμε την περιγραφή της οικονομίας στην περίοδο 1465-1570.

وَالْمَدِينَةُ بِرُوزِ

يَكْمُ حِيَاوُ حَادِرِ كَوْنِكِ سَكِينُ

حَا سَوَابِي طُوغَانِ قُورْتِي

عَدَدُ بَنَاتِهَا نَابِتِ زَلَاتِ مَكُونُهَا الْمَكُونَةُ

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ع

رُوزِ حَا اِسْحَارِ اِسْرَارِ اِسْرَارِ

٧٥ ١ ١

سَهَا سَهْرُ رُوزِ

اِسْحَارِ اِبْرَاهِيمِ لَادِقُودِ مَوْلَانِ اِسْحَارِ طَابَعِ

اَبُو اَبِي مَصْفِي مَصْفِي قَجَابِ حَيْلِ مَصْفِي

مَنْبِ قَلْقَارِ اِسْمِ اِسْمِ عَدَدِهَا سَرَاوِي

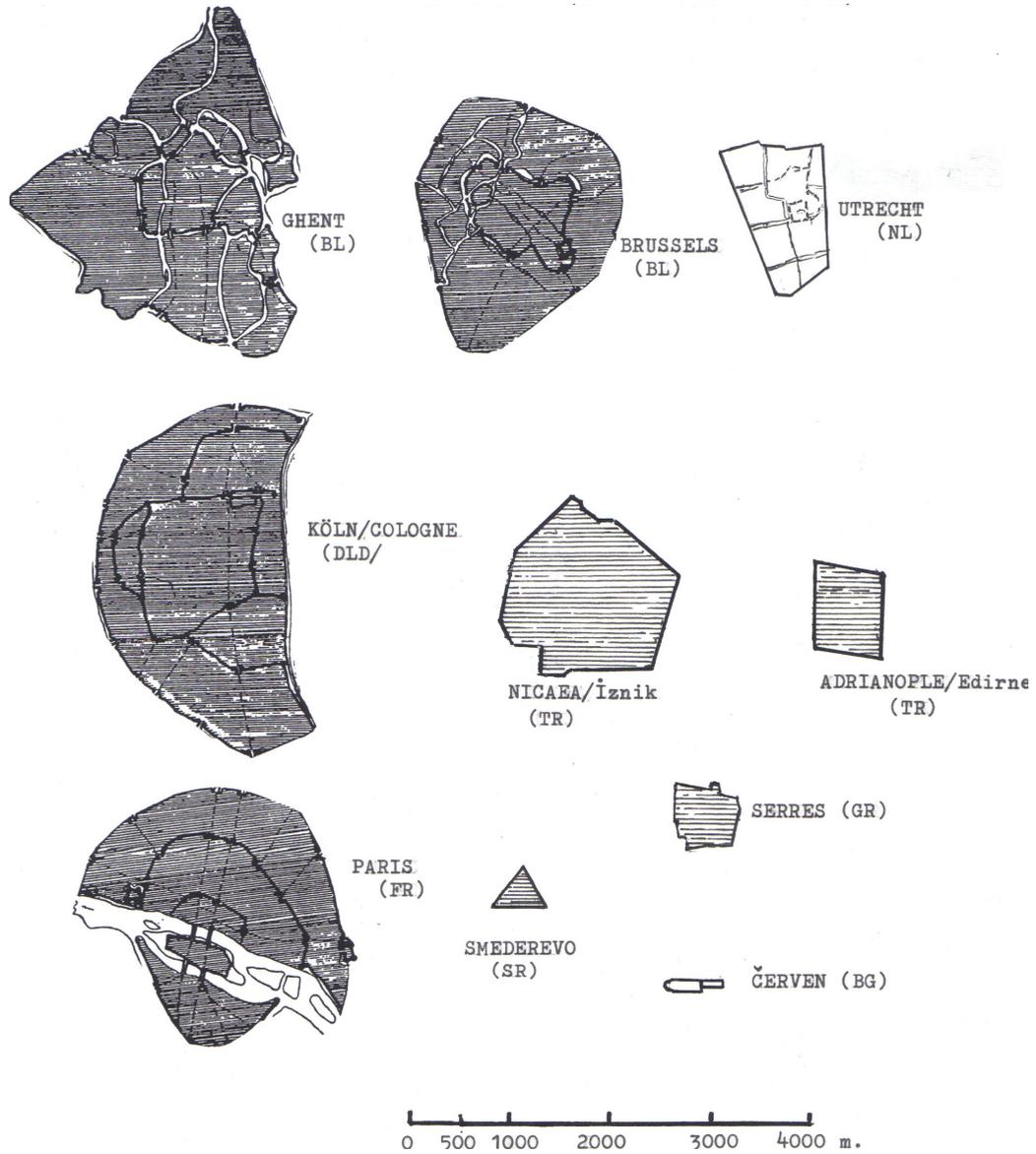
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T.D. 3 B.B.O.A. Beginning description of Serres in 1454/55.



Some 14th century cities of Western Europe compared with some Byzantine cities in the Balkans and W. Asia Minor (all on same scale)



ΧΟΡΗΓΟΙ:



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