

Chapter One: Colonisation and Islamicisation

1.1 Colonisation and Islamicisation

OTTOMAN RULE BROUGHT with it an invasion: the systematic colonising of Macedonia by Muslims (both Turks and non-Turks) from Asia Minor.¹ Through colonisation the Ottomans aimed at creating stable support for the new political and social system in conquered Macedonia.² The contemporary commentator L. Villari stated that, as a borderland, ‘the Turkish Sultans made every effort to convert it into a powerful bulwark of Islam’.³ The historian M. Minoski considered the colonisers the ‘eyes and ears’ of the Ottoman authorities,⁴ serving the function of monitoring the activities of the Macedonian Christians. Colonisation assisted the Ottomans to secure their rule and created a favourable environment for the Islamicisation of the Christian population.

The nineteenth century historian M. Tozer claims that the earliest Muslim colonisers came from the Saruhan district in Turkey in the late fourteenth century, and, accompanied by Ottoman troops, settled in the cities and large towns throughout the land.⁵ Confirmation of the colonising process is evident through an examination of Turkish documents. Muslim communities based in urban centres were visible in the fifteenth century, and their numbers rapidly increased during the course of the sixteenth century. In Tetovo in 1452 there were 146 Christian families to 60 Muslim families. By the middle of the sixteenth century (in 1545), the number

¹ Prior to the Ottoman invasion Macedonia was an exclusively Christian land. Ottoman rule modified the religious and ethnic composition of the land with effects still visible in the twenty-first century. The same is also true of the wider Balkans where the Ottomans ruled, including Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina.

² M. Apostolski, D. Zografski, A. Stoyanovski, G. Todorovski, editors, *A History of the Macedonian People*, Skopje, 1979, p. 81.

³ L. Villari, *Races, Religions and Propagandas*, New York, 1905, p. 129.

⁴ M. Minoski, *Osloboditelnite Dvizhenja i Vostanija vo Makedonija 1564-1615* [Liberation Movements and Rebellions in Macedonia 1564-1615], Skopje, 1972, p. 41.

⁵ T.F. Tozer, *The Highlands of Turkey*, Vol I, London, 1869, p. 369.

of Christian families had shrunk to 99, whilst the Muslim element increased to 101 (38 were Islamicised Macedonian Christian). Twenty-three years later, in 1568, there were 108 Christian and 329 Muslim families (184 were Islamicised Macedonian Christians).⁶ Colonisation in Skopje was similar. In 1452 there were 312 Christian families to 516 Muslim families; in 1544 Christian families numbered 216 whilst the number of Muslim families had doubled to 1067 (357 were Islamicised Christians). By 1568 the Christian population grew to 511 families whilst the Muslim population continued to surge, reaching 1560 families (709 were Islamicised Christian families).⁷

Skopje, a principal city, was divided into many separate quarters known as *maali*. Each *maalo* was inhabited exclusively either by Christians or Muslims. In 1452 Skopje consisted of 31 *maali* - Christians resided in 8 *maali* and Muslims in 23. In the space of 116 years to the year 1568, Skopje comprised 67 *maali*. Christian *maali* increased by 2, to 10, whilst Muslim *maali* more than doubled to 57.⁸ Christians and Muslims lived in separate quarters throughout Macedonian cities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and to some extent this pattern continued into the late nineteenth century.⁹

The intensity of colonisation (and Islamicisation) in Macedonian urban centres was observed by many early travel writers, remarking that Macedonian cities in many

⁶ From the 'Kalkandelen (Tetovski) vilayet opshiren popisen defter broj 12 od 1452/53' [Tetovo vilayet - Detailed Census Register number 12 from 1452/53] published in M. Sokoloski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV vek* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Registers from the XV century], Vol III, Skopje, 1976, pp. 103-105; and, 'spisok na selata vo nahijata Kalkandelen (Tetovo)' [List of villages in the nahia of Kalkandelen (Tetovo)], Document number 190 dated 1568/69, M. Sokoloski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshiren Popisen Defter za Skopskiot Sandjak od 1568-69 godina* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Register for the Skopje sandjak from 1568/69], Vol VI, Book I, Skopje, 1984, pp. 245-253.

⁷ From the 'Skopski vilayet - Opshiren Popisen Defter broj 12 od 1452/53 godina' [Skopje vilayet - Detailed Census Register number 12 from 1452/53] published in M. Sokoloski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV vek* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Registers from the XV century], Vol III, Skopje, 1976, pp. 158-167; and, 'Kalkandelen (Tetovo) Vilayet - Opshiren Popisen Defeter broj 12 od 1452/53 godina' [Kalkandelen (Tetovo) Vilayet - Detailed Census Register number 12 from 1452/53] published in *Turski Dokumenti - Opshiren Popisen Defter za Skopskiot Sandjak od 1568/69 godina* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Registers from the XV century], Vol VI, Book I, Skopje, 1984, pp. 29-66.

⁸ Ibid, see footnotes 6 and 7.

⁹ It is interesting to note that it appears some of the names of the *maali* appear to have survived. For instance in Skopje during the sixteenth century there was a *Chairli maalo*, today there is a suburb of *Chair*.

instances had taken on an Asiatic character. New townships were established along strategic positions. The prominent late nineteenth-century ethnographer, V. Kanchov, commented that some of these towns grew into considerable urban centres, such as the city of Enidzhe Vardar, situated on the road from Solun to Voden.¹⁰ Great pressures were brought to bear upon the Christian population in traditional Macedonian urban centres. From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries many Christians were forced to desert their homes, others Islamicised, and strategic hillside positions were overrun by the new inhabitants.¹¹

Few Macedonian cities were left untouched by Muslim colonisation. Strategic colonisation was pursued intensely during early Ottoman rule, and by the second half of the sixteenth century the Muslim element was greater than the Christian in thirteen Macedonian cities.¹² This pattern was to be reversed from the seventeenth century onwards when Christians started to migrate into the cities in large numbers, and Muslim numbers began to decline.¹³

Two other principal routes for strategic colonisation were those from Drama through Seres to Petrich, Strumica, Shtip and Skopje, and from Solun along the Vardar Valley to Skopje.¹⁴ Nomadic Turkic peoples such as the Yuruks and Konjari were also brought to Macedonia. C. Eliot, a former Secretary of the British Embassy

¹⁰ V. Kanchov, *Makedonia Etnografija i Statistika* [Macedonia, Ethnography and Statistics], Sofia, 1970 (1900), p. 347. In the 1920s the Greek government renamed Enidzhe Vardar as Yiannitsa and Voden as Edhessa.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 347-348. Kanchov regards Ohrid, Voden, Bitola, Tetovo, Petrich, Strumica, Kratovo, Seres, Shtip, Drama, Kavala and Melnik amongst others as including the old traditional Macedonian urban towns.

¹² An eminent ethnographer and historian of the Macedonian Muslim population, N. Limanoski's publication *Izlamizacijata i etnickite promeni vo Makedonija* [Islamicisation and ethnic changes in Macedonia], Skopje, 1993, p. 83, is the principal work in the field. Limanoski considers that the dominant number of Muslims in the cities could not be entirely attributed to colonists, but that Islamised Christians may have constituted the majority of all Muslims in cities, especially in the climate of intense colonisation during the sixteenth century. Ibid, p. 84.

¹³ The historian, G. M. Terry, *The Origins and Development of the Macedonian Revolutionary Movement with Particular Reference to the Tayna Makedonsko-Odrinska Revolucionerna Organizatsiya from its Conception in 1893 to the Ilinden Uprising of 1903*, Unpublished MA thesis, University of Nottingham, 1974, p. 13; See also, L. Villari, op. cit, p.130, M. Pandevska, *Prisilni Migracii vo Makedonija 1875-1881* [Forced Migrations in Macedonia 1875-1881], Skopje, 1993 and D. Silyanovski, editor, *Makedonia kako prirodno i stopansko celo* [Macedonia as a natural and economic unit], Sofia, 1945

¹⁴ H.F. Tozer, op. cit. pp. 369-370; N. Limanoski, *Islamskata Religija i Izlamiziranite Makedonci* [The Islamic Religion and the Islamicised Macedonians], Skopje, 1989, p. 72.

at Constantinople from 1893 to 1898 claimed that Yuruks and Konjari engaged in livestock breeding, found conditions in Macedonia suitable to maintain their traditional livelihood, and were to be found predominantly in the valley of the Bistrica, and north of Solun.¹⁵

Scattered throughout the country, certain areas contained greater concentrations of Turks. Most significant were the areas along the Aegean coastline, along the fertile plains beside the Vardar River in central Macedonia and in the southern Macedonian region from Ostrovo Lake south to the Bistrica River.¹⁶ Although present in great numbers in these regions, they nevertheless did not constitute the entire population, as the mountainous parts of these same districts were usually inhabited by Christians.¹⁷

As well as establishing new villages, Turkish colonisers often settled in existing Christian villages. Fifteenth and sixteenth-century Turkish documents provide evidence that it was common practice to settle small groups of Muslims, usually between one and four families, in Christian villages during this period. In the Skopje region in 1452, the village Oreshani consisted of only two Christian families; in 1544 it grew to six Christian families and in 1568 there were nine Christian families and one Muslim family.¹⁸ In the Tetovo region in 1453 Chelopek consisted of 88 Christian families, however in 1568 there were 62 Christian families and 12 Muslim

¹⁵ C. Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, London, 1965 (1900), p. 99. Yuruks and Konjari predominantly came to Macedonia during the period between the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Turkish colonisation in the Ovche-pole district was first recorded in the early sixteenth century (1513). Military personnel and soldiers first settled, and later entire families arrived. Intense colonisation affected the district from the end of the fifteenth century to the early sixteenth with nomadic sheep breeding Turkic tribes arriving. Colonisers typically settled on the plains alongside rivers and roads whilst Macedonians established new villages along mountainous locations. During the seventeenth century Macedonians from the district rebelled against Ottoman oppression and in the period 1683 to 1690 many voluntarily joined the Austro-Hungarian army that liberated the towns of Shtip, Veles and Tikvesh. D. Stojchevski, *Pavleshenci*, Skopje, 1986, p. 75.

¹⁶ V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 352. The Greek government has renamed Ostrovo (Lake) as Vergoritits (Lake) in the 1920s.

¹⁷ L. Villari, op. cit. p. 130.

¹⁸ From 'Skopski vilayet - Opshiren Popisen Defter broj 12 od 1452/53 godina' [Skopje vilayet - Detailed Census Register number 12 from 1452/53] published in M. Sokolovski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV veka* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Registers from the XV century], Vol III, Skopje, 1976, p. 173.

families (two were Islamicised).¹⁹ In the Bitola region (to 1468) Bitola town experienced mass colonisation with a total of 278 Muslim families colonised into the town with a native Christian population of 160 families.²⁰ In the surrounding villages Muslims were implanted in only two Christian villages, Lazhec and Pozdeshevo, with one Muslim family in each respective village.²¹ Four Bitola region villages comprised an exclusively Muslim population - Orizari (21 families), Saro Hizirli (10 families), Leskovar (43 families) and Vasharajca (11 families)²². It is unclear whether these villages were newly established colonist villages or whether they were previously Christian.²³ Nevertheless it is certain that over a period of time, sometimes centuries, former Christian villages were transformed into Muslim villages, with the original Macedonian Christian inhabitants pressured to leave or to convert to Islam. This was particularly the case with strategically situated villages that were targeted for settlement by the authorities.²⁴

¹⁹ From the 'Kalkandelen (Tetovski) vilayet opshiren popisen defter broj 12 od 1452/53' [Tetovo vilayet - Detailed Census Register number 12 from 1452/53] published in M. Sokoloski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV vek* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Registers from the XV century], Vol III, Skopje, 1976, pp. 43-44.

²⁰ From 'Bitolska nahia (Manastir) - Opshiren Popisni Defteri broj 993 i 988 od 1468 godina'. Popisot e opfaten od list 1-10 na defterot broj 993 i od list 11-97 na defterot broj 988. [Bitola nahia [Manastir] - Detailed Census Registers, numbers 993 and 988 from 1468. Census material derived from list 1-10 from register number 993 and lists 11-97 from register number 988]. Published in M. Sokoloski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni defteri od XV vek* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census registers from the XV century], Vol II, Skopje, 1973, pp. 141-145.

²¹ Ibid, p. 156.

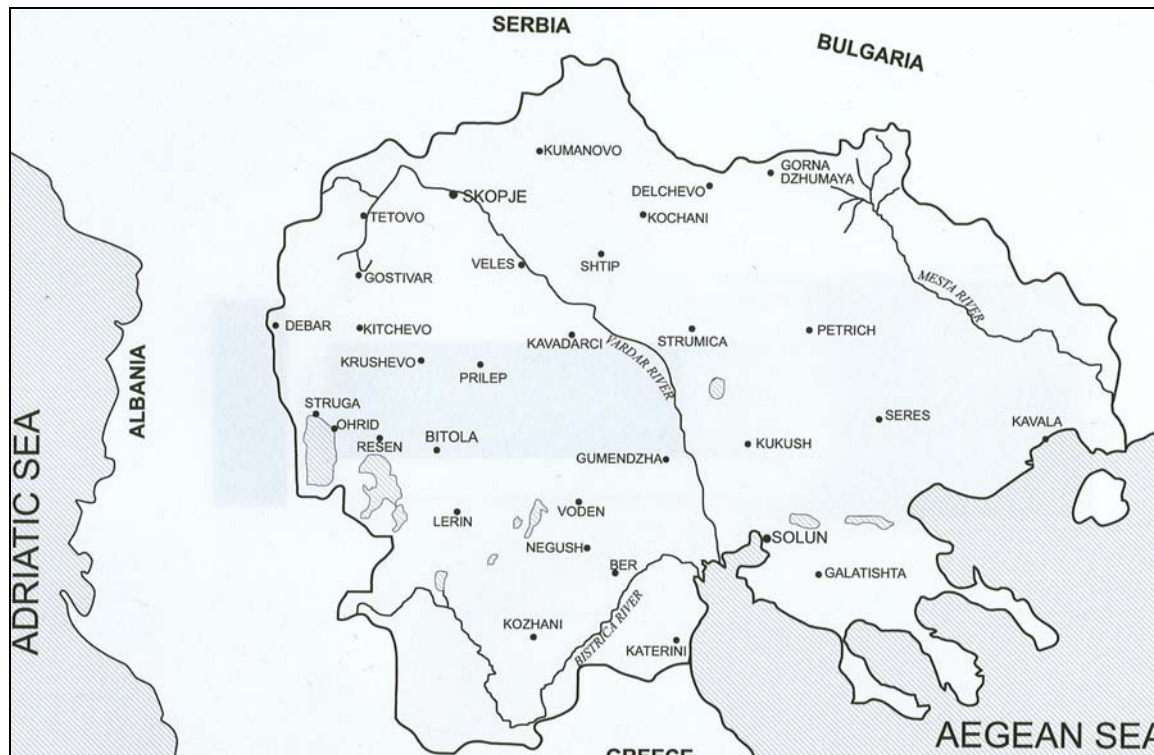
Pozdeshevo appears in published Ottoman tax documents of 1841/42 as Pozdesh. See D. Gorgiev, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Popisi od XIX vek* [Turkish Documents - Censuses from the XIX century] Skopje, 1997, pp. 88-89. However, the village Pozdeshevo does not appear in the prominent ethnographic and statistical data published by V. Kanchov in 1900 (op. cit), or by D.M. Brancoff, *La Macedoine et sa population chretienne* [The Christian Population of Macedonia] Paris, 1905.

²² M. Sokoloski, editor, 1973, op. cit. pp. 175, 176 and 197.

²³ A difficulty ascertaining which group originally established a village is connected to the village name. Names that appear typically Turkish and have no other Christian variation are likely to have been established by colonisers. However, others are known to have dual names used by the respective Macedonian and Turkish communities. Kanchov points out that some villages have both 'Turkish and Bulgarian names.' V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 358.

²⁴ See M. Pandevska, op. cit; N. Limanoski, (1993), op. cit. and V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit.

Figure 1.1: Generally accepted limits of Macedonia



The Gorna Zhupa district of Debar presents an example of strategic colonisation. The central Christian village of Kodzhadzhik in Gorna Zhupa was transformed into an Ottoman fortress in the fifteenth century. Originally surrounded by eight villages, in 1467 only two of the eight villages remained inhabited, Elevci and Dolgash, and both were exclusively Christian.²⁵ As a military installation on the borderland of the Empire, Ottoman soldiers brought their families from Turkey and settled them in the region.²⁶ Thus the district was subjected to intense Turkish colonisation. A local villager from Galitchnik, Shtiljan Trajanov Chaparoski (1870–1934) compiled ethnic and religious data on the Debar region villages at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Chaparoski's data, by the end of the nineteenth century, Turks constituted the overwhelming majority of inhabitants in the Gorna

²⁵ From 'Vilayetot Gorni Debar - Opshiren Popisen Defter Broj 508 od 1467 godina' [Vilayet Upper Debar, Detailed Census Register number 508 from 1467], from M. Sokolovski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV vek* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Registers from the XV century], Skopje, 1976, pp. 314-315. The remaining six villages were Evla, Novak, Kochishta, Breshtani, Osolnica and Prelenik.

²⁶ N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. p. 179.

Zhupa district. Macedonians accounted for approximately 18 per cent of the Gorna Zhupa population, with Macedonian Christians forming approximately 15 per cent and Macedonian Muslims approximately 3 per cent.²⁷

Muslim colonisation initially consisted of Turks and Turkic peoples arriving from Asia Minor. However, with the later Ottoman subjugation of Albania and the mass religious conversion of that land from Christian to Muslim, Macedonia was invaded by a new colonising element, more hostile and violent than the Ottomans. Intense Albanian colonisation commenced from the end of the eighteenth century, continuing throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, and, to a lesser degree to the end of Ottoman rule.²⁸ Over the summer months Albanian bandits routinely crossed into Macedonia to raid Christian villages,²⁹ and, over time, members of these bands settled in Christian villages.³⁰ As Muslims, Albanians rose to positions of prominence in the Ottoman hierarchy and aided the movement of Muslims into Macedonian villages. This could take the form of introducing Muslim tax collectors or simply settling Muslim Albanian families. Colonisation of Christian villages by Albanian Muslims commonly saw the Christian element reduce over a period of time, often until the entire village became Albanian.³¹ Albanian colonists typically moved

²⁷ Shtiljan Trajanov Chaparoski (1870-1934), *Mesnost(ite) od Debarskoto okružhie* [Places in the Debar region], document from the Macedonian Academy of Sciences (MANU) archive, Catalogue Number NR54, pp.19-21. S.T. Chaparoski commenced compiling data at the end of the 1880s, the final entries were made in 1900. At the end of the nineteenth century there were only two Orthodox Christian churches in the Gorna Zhupa district, in the villages of Selce and Kochishta. Priest Kipro was the resident Priest in Selce and administered the villages of Gorno and Dolno Eleveci, Dolgash and Osolnica. Ibid, pp 19-21.

²⁸ N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. p. 191.

²⁹ G.M. Terry, op. cit. p. 8.

³⁰ N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. p. 126.

³¹ V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 388.

The well known early twentieth century journalist and commentator H.N Brailsford spent five months during the winter of 1903/04 in Macedonia (together with his wife) working on behalf of the British Relief Fund after the Ilinden Uprising. In his prominent book, *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future*, London, 1905, Brailsford comments on Albanian colonisation stating, 'this sort of thing has been going on steadily throughout the western half of Macedonia for two or three centuries at least, and the process is not yet complete', p 90. Another perspective on Albanian colonisation is provided by the anthropologist, U. Tairovski (a Macedonian Muslim). He stated that at the beginning of the nineteenth century Albanian *agi* and *begs* from the Peshkopeja district moved into the Debar region (bringing their workers and servants, together with their families) forcefully taking fields and villages from Macedonian Christians, who were offered no protection by the authorities. *Slovenskata makro i mikro toponomija vo Dolna Debarska Zhupa* [Slavic macro and micro toponyms in Dolna Debarska Zhupa], Skopje 1987, p. 285.

into Macedonian Christian villages and not into villages inhabited exclusively by Macedonian Muslims.³²

Albanian colonists arrived in Macedonia from various regions of Albania, and in Macedonia they continued to expand internally. For instance, Albanians from Korcha moved into the Dolna Prespa district, and later a colony moved into the Bitola region along the slopes of the Baba mountain ranges in the villages of Zlokukjani, Kanino, Kishava and Ostrec.³³ Similarly, the village of S'lp in the Kitchevo region was made up of Albanians who had arrived from the Debar region in 1840.³⁴

The movement of the Albanian population was welcomed and encouraged by the Ottomans, as an instrument to subjugate the Christian subjects.³⁵ Albanians were used as a tool to persecute Christians in a manner similar to the way the Ottomans used the Kurds in Asia.³⁶ A Balkan correspondent for *The New York Times* reported in 1901 that Macedonia was in a condition of chronic anarchy 'owing to the lawlessness of the Albanians, whose attitude to the Christian population is worse than that of the Kurds toward the Armenians'.³⁷ Although most prevalent in the northwestern parts

³² N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. p. 159. According to Abdula Odzheski from the village of Zhirovnica in the Reka district of the Debar region, after Islamicisation, Macedonian Moslem villages were not safeguarded from Albanian banditry. Abdula Odzheski (born 1945 in Zhirovnica) interview conducted 25 March 2000 in Zhirovnica. Ismail Bojda, from the village of Brod in the Gora region (a Macedonian region of Kosovo) also stated that in the Gora region, Albanian banditry commenced from the pre-Islamicisation period and continued after the Islamicisation of Macedonians. Ismail Bojda (born 1953 in Brod, Gora region of Kosovo) interview conducted 7 March 2000 in Skopje.

³³ V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 385

Kanino and Ostrec were originally exclusively Macedonian Christian villages. From the 'Bitolska nahia opshirni popisni defteri broj 993 i 988 od 1468 godina', [Bitola nahia - detailed census registers numbers 993 and 988 from 1468] in M. Sokolowski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV vek* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Registers of the XV century], Vol II, Skopje, 1973, pp. 151 and 231. No data is available regarding the ethnic composition of Zlokukani and Kishava prior to Albanian colonisation.

³⁴ G. Abadzhiev, editor, *Borbite vo Jugozapadna Makedonija po spomenite na Luka Dzherov i Lazar Dimitrov* [Battles in south west Macedonia according to the memoirs of Luka Dzherov and Lazar Dimitrov], Skopje, 1952, p. 12.

³⁵ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 90.

³⁶ The French Member of Parliament, George Beri, from a sitting of the French Parliament on 10 March 1903 (Parliamentary Hansard). M. Pandevski, editor, *Makedonofilskoto Dvizhejje vo Zapadna Evropa vo 1903 - Dokumenti* [Macedonophile movement in Western Europe in 1903 - Documents], Skopje, 1995, pp. 74 and 77; C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 369; and, L. Villari, op. cit. p. 159.

³⁷ *The New York Times*, Friday 18 October 1901, p. 1. Article entitled 'Anarchy in Macedonia'.

of Macedonia, small colonies of Albanians were also found in other regions where they were ‘deliberately planted by the Turks for obvious strategic reasons along the frontier of free Bulgaria’.³⁸

Muslim colonisation continued at various levels of intensity throughout Ottoman rule, with different regions colonised at different periods. For example, Kriva Palanka was settled by Muslim colonisers in the seventeenth century, Gostivar during the eighteenth century and Lerin at the end of the eighteenth century.³⁹ During the second half of the nineteenth century colonisation escalated as Muslim refugees left the former Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and parts of Serbia and Bulgaria. Just as the Balkan lands were liberating themselves from the Ottoman yoke, Macedonia was under siege by waves of new colonisers. Major routes taken by Muslim refugees retreating from newly liberated Balkan lands inevitably led many through Macedonia. Refugees leaving Serbia travelled to Sandjak, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and Turkey. Those leaving Bosnia mainly travelled to Turkey via Macedonia and those leaving Bulgaria travelled to Macedonia, the Adrianople Vilayet, and Turkey.⁴⁰

Retreating Muslims were made up of a great assortment of people, united by religion but not by ethnicity. They were known by the collective term ‘Muhadjirs’, meaning ‘emigrants’, and considered to be amongst the most fanatical of Muslims.⁴¹ These diverse Muslim elements all shared a similar experience before leaving their previous homes – they either left through persecution from Christians who had reclaimed their statehood, or had left of their own free will, anticipating that persecution was inevitable. (During periods of great conflict, Christians could be as

³⁸ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 91; see also an Austrian Diplomatic report by B. Para, Austrian Consul in Skopje, dated 31 May 1905, Report Number 94, in D. Zografski, editor, *Avstriski Dokumenti 1905-1906* [Austrian Documents 1905-1906], Vol I, Skopje, 1977, pp. 64-65.

³⁹ D. Silyanovski, editor, op. cit. p. 263. Lerin, a town in southern Macedonia renamed Florina by the Greek government in the 1920s.

⁴⁰ M. Pandevska, op. cit. pp. 104-109.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 147; L. Villari, op. cit. p. 129.

brutal as their Muslim rivals.) Most refugees settled in various regions in Turkey, travelling via Macedonia to arrive at their destination.

As a frontier province under the rule of the Sultan, Muhadjirs were welcomed and some were given lands, further dispossessing the native Christian population.⁴² Muhadjirs were settled in urban centres as well as the countryside, often in strategic locations.⁴³ The planting of colonies in the interior of the country was regarded with great suspicion, 'as being intended as a demonstration against the Christian population'.⁴⁴ Muhadjir refugees created further insecurity in the land, having arrived harbouring a grievance towards Christians and as

Landless peasants without remunerative employment; and while some of them swell the class of officials, soldiers, and spies, the majority live in poverty and furnish the materials of a dangerous and angry mob which is always ready to avenge its historical wrongs by massacre.⁴⁵

The colonisation of Muhadjirs was a heavy burden upon the Christian population, particularly in the urban centres where Christians were forced from their homes in order to house the new arrivals. In Strumica during January 1878, one-fifth of the Christian inhabitants were forced out of their homes in mid-winter.⁴⁶ In Veles, a city of 2500 Macedonian Christian households, 500 families were forcibly removed from their homes.⁴⁷ In May 1879 in Skopje, 100 Christian families were forced to take in 100 Muhadjir families.⁴⁸ Colonisers were also implanted in villages, both Christian and Muslim. In the Skopje region, which consisted of 148 villages, Muhadjirs were

⁴² L. Villari, op. cit. p. 133.

⁴³ G.M. MacKenzie and I.P. Irby, *The Slavonic Provinces of Turkey in Europe*, London, 1866, p. 34. G.M. MacKenzie and I.P. Irby were two English women who travelled together through Macedonia and the Balkans during the nineteenth century.

⁴⁴ H.F. Tozer, op. cit. p. 370. Much larger colonies of Circassians were settled in Bulgaria and Serbia.

⁴⁵ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. pp. 80-81.

In 1866 G.M. MacKenzie and I.P. Irby noted that colonisers are kept well supplied with arms ('of which the Christian is deprived') and 'these new immigrants come thirsting to avenge their own sufferings on all who bear the Christian name'. Op. cit. p. 35.

⁴⁶ M. Pandevska, op. cit. p. 120. Pandevska states that approximately 2,500 Muhadjirs were settled in the Strumica region.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 125-126. A total of 5,140 Muhadjirs were settled in the Veles region, a city of approximately 3,000 homes, of which 2,500 were Macedonian Christian and 500 Muslim.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 128-129. In Skopje, 250 Muslim homes housed a further 250 Muhadjir families.

settled in approximately 60 villages with a minimum of 2–3 families per village to a maximum of 15–20 families.⁴⁹ The historian Pandevska, contends that of the 600,000 to 1,000,000 Muslim refugees that left liberated Christian Balkan lands, approximately 200,000 settled in Macedonia, with approximately half in the Skopje vilayet.

There was a distinct political and social advantage to being Muslim in the Ottoman Empire. Whether one converted to the Muslim religion by force or through self-interest, religious conversion allowed one to leave the oppressed class. From an Ottoman political perspective, the authorities benefited by the increase in the number of Muslims in the Empire, as this created favourable conditions for more secure rule.

Islamicisation continued throughout the course of Ottoman rule. The Serb ethnographer, Hadzhivasilevich, considered that the most intense Islamicisation occurred during the religious monopoly enjoyed by the Constantinople Patriarchate in Macedonia between 1767 and 1870.⁵⁰

During early Ottoman subjugation the Ottomans generally displayed tolerance towards the Christian faith, as evidenced by the rarity of forced conversions to Islam during most of the fifteenth century.⁵¹ The earlier religious tolerance displayed by the Ottomans appeared to be coming to an end when Sultan Selim I (1512–1520) seriously considered converting all his Christian subjects to Islam, putting to death all those that resisted and converting all Christian churches to mosques.⁵² Although Sultan Selim I was discouraged from pursuing such radical measures by the Constantinople Muftija Dzhemali and the Grand Vizier Piri⁵³, centuries-old churches and monasteries were destroyed in the ensuing fierce attack against the Christians in

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 128

⁵⁰ J. Hadzhivasilevich, *Muslimani Nashe Krvi u Juzhnoj Srbiji* [Muslims of our blood in Southern Serbia], Belgrade, 1924, p. 70.

⁵¹ Very few instances of conversions to Islam were identified in available Ottoman Turkish published documents during this period.

⁵² V. Kanchov, *Makedonia Etnografija i Statistika* [Macedonia, Ethnography and Statistics], Sofia, 1970 (Sofia, 1900), p. 332.

⁵³ Ibid, p.332.

the sixteenth century. Numerous Christian holy places were demolished by Ottoman fanatics, whilst other sites, such as the Cathedral Church of Saint Sofia in Ohrid, were transformed into mosques.⁵⁴

The attack upon Christianity continued during the rule of Sultan Murat III (1574–1598). Significant legal changes occurred – the courts lost their integrity, they avoided prosecuting Muslims, and Christian witnesses in Muslim courts were no longer necessarily admissible.⁵⁵

Muslim missionaries of the Bektash order also arrived in Macedonia during the sixteenth century and established tekkes in the surroundings of the village Shipkovic (Tetovo region), the village of Poroj (Tetovo region), in Kitchevo and the famous 'Arabati Baba tekke' in Tetovo.⁵⁶

From the late fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth century, Islamicisation was intensified, primarily in urban centres.⁵⁷ It was first directed at the old land-owning nobility, who were encouraged to accept Islam in order to protect their wealth.⁵⁸ Others viewed conversion as a means for economic gain as well as an opportunity to enter the Ottoman administration. Hadzhivasilevich provided an

⁵⁴ During the rule of Murat IV (1623-1640) the Ottomans attempted to transform the famous church of St Kliment into a mosque. It was only saved after many of its precious treasures were sacrificed in order to buy it back. In Ohrid, according to local legend, a mosque known to the locals as *Krst džhamija* (literally 'cross mosque') was built from the ruins of a church (St George) which had been devastated by the Ottomans. Its walls were still partially erect when the Ottomans commenced to rebuild it as a mosque. For three consecutive days during construction, upon arrival in the morning the Ottomans would find the work performed the previous day on the walls had collapsed. They continued rebuilding it into a mosque and safeguarded it from further overnight damage by placing a guard at the site. At its completion it was noticed that in the middle of the Muslim crescent perched on the peak of the dome, there was a cross. The authorities promptly replaced the religious symbol believing that someone had swapped it over. The following day, the cross re-appeared. The Ottomans became furious and stationed a guard overnight before the building. The following morning the cross re-appeared in the middle of the crescent. Perplexed by the event, the Ottomans allowed it to remain and so it stands there today.

⁵⁵ N. Limanoski, *Izlamizacijata i etnichkite promeni vo Makedonija* [Islamisation and ethnic changes in Macedonia], Skopje, 1993, p. 86.

⁵⁶ V. Cvetanoski, *Arabati Baba Tekke* [Arabati Baba Tekke], Tetovo, 2000, p. 5. Note: A *tekke* is a Muslim monastery or a religious place of worship.

⁵⁷ V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 331.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 331-332; and, N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. p. 43.

example from 1570 in Skopje, where an individual was prepared to accept Islam on condition that he was given a particular administrative position.⁵⁹ The affluent urban element of Macedonian society during early Ottoman rule that accepted Islam adopted the characteristics of Turkish people, including the Turkish language, and over time became indistinguishable from the Turks.⁶⁰

As the Ottomans initially consolidated their rule in the urban centres, where they settled large numbers of colonists, it is therefore not surprising that Islamicisation was more likely to occur in urban locations than rural areas. In 1569, 23 per cent of Muslims in the large towns and cities of Macedonia were converted Christians, whilst in the countryside villages it was merely 13 per cent (see Table 1.1). In Bitola, 40 per cent of Muslim households were Islamicised Christians, whilst in the countryside only 9 per cent of Muslims were similarly Islamicised. As is evident from the data in Table 1.1, in all but two towns from a total of 16, Islamicised Christians in urban centres constituted a greater proportion in comparison to their village counterparts in the same region.

⁵⁹ J. Hadzhivasilevich, 1924, op. cit. pp. 40-41.

⁶⁰ N. Limanoski, *Islamskata religija i Izlamizirane Makedonci* [The Islamic religion and the Islamicised Macedonians], Skopje, 1989, pp. 76-77.

Table 1.1: Urban and Rural Colonisation and Islamicisation in Macedonia, 1569

	Urban			Villages			Total		
	Total Muslim homes	Converts	%	Total Muslim homes	Converts	%	Total Muslim homes	Converts	%
Demir Hisar	26	16	61	611	105	17	637	121	18
Tetovo	330	184	55	384	107	27	714	291	40
Skopje	1,551	701	45	1,001	172	17	2,552	873	34
Prilep	282	126	44	585	52	8	867	178	20
Bitola	608	248	40	561	56	9	1,169	304	26
Seres	824	318	38	351	65	18	1,175	383	32
Solun	1,212	468	38	481	81	16	1,693	549	32
Ber	384	143	37	194	30	13	578	173	29
Enidzhe Vardar	529	165	31	847	113	5	1,376	278	20
Lerin	182	55	30	2,188	179	8	2,370	234	9
Kostur	142	42	29	340	76	22	482	118	24
Kavala	181	47	25	770	104	13	951	151	15
Drama	205	45	21	2,019	150	7	2,224	195	8
Nevrokop	304	63	20	1,725	422	24	2,029	485	23
Serfidzhe	87	17	19	1,191	67	5	1,278	84	6
Kitchevo	80	14	17	99	29	28	179	43	24
TOTALS	6,927	1,652	23	13,357	1808	13	20,274	4,460	22

Source: M. Sokoloski, *Izlamizacija vo Makedonia*, Skopje, as cited in N. Limanoski, *Izlamizacijata i etnichkite promeni vo Makedonija*, Skopje, 1993, p. 212.

Table 1.2: Colonisation and Islamicisation of Debar Region 1467–1583 (Districts of Dolna Reka, Mala Reka, Golema Reka, Dolna Zhupa and Gorna Zhupa)

Village	1467			1519			1583		
	C	M	I	C	M	I	C	M	I
Belchica	Un			18			30		
Bitushe	3			28			12		
Bogdevo	3			16			10		
Boletin ⁶¹	5						3		
Brodec	4			27			20		
Dovirche ⁶²	5								
Draginci ⁶³	Un								
Galitchnik ⁶⁴	Un			33			32		
Gari ⁶⁵	Un			62			40		
Glavino ⁶⁶	Un								
Kichenica ⁶⁷	Un			8					
Kosovrasti Dolno ⁶⁸	16			63	1		63	7	1
Kosovrasti Gorno	6			36			13		1
Krakornica	3			12			20		1
Leskovo ⁶⁹	Un			8			5		
Melnichani Dolno	5			16			12	2	1
Melnichani Gorno	6			17			33		
Nichburi	8			16			20		
Nistrovo	8			36			70		
Novaci ⁷⁰	4								
Orahovo	3			12			5	2	1
Pesja Gorica	Un			17			10		1
Prisojnica	5			16			15		
Radoslavicha ⁷¹	4			28			20		
Ribnica Golemo ⁷²	10			34					
Ribnica Malo ⁷³	4			42	1				

⁶¹ No data available for 1519

⁶² Dovirche is an unidentified village and not recorded in subsequent Ottoman records.

⁶³ The uninhabited village of Draginci does not appear on 1519 or 1583 Ottoman records.

⁶⁴ In the years 1519 and 1583, Galitchnik is recorded as a Dervish village.

⁶⁵ In the years 1519 and 1583, Gari is recorded as a Dervish village.

⁶⁶ Glavino is recorded as an uninhabited village in 1467 and no further mention is made of the village in the 1519 and 1583 censuses.

⁶⁷ No data available for Kichenica village in the year 1583.

⁶⁸ Kosovrasti Dolno is recorded as a Dervish village.

⁶⁹ Leskovo is an unidentifiable village.

⁷⁰ Novaci does not appear in the 1519 and 1583 records as it was transferred into another administrative area.

⁷¹ Radoslavicha is an unidentifiable village.

⁷² No data for Ribnica Golemo in 1583.

⁷³ No data for Ribnica Mala in 1583.

Rostusha	15			40	1		6	4	4
Selce	Un			22			20	1	
Sence	4			42	1		31	2	1
Shtirovica	11			30			50		3
Skudrinje	11			52			18	3	2
Strezemir	5			38			60		2
Tiho Pole ⁷⁴	Un			7			Un		
Trebishta	15			55			41	5	
Tresonche Golemo	Un			12			34		
Tresonche Malo	Un						37		
Trnica ⁷⁵	1						10		
Usoj	Un			20			40		1
Vidusha ⁷⁶	4			14					
Volkovija ⁷⁷	6			13			40		
Vrbeni ⁷⁸	9			94	1		125	2	1
Vrbjani	16			55	1		50	7	13
Yagorec	Un			Un			Un		
Yanchi	1			6			8		
Zhirovnica	22			69	3		20	40	48
Zhuzhne	5			14			20		1
TOTAL	204	0	0	999	8	0	934	75	82

Source and notes: Vilayetot Reka Opshiren Popisen Defter Broj 508 (1467) from *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV vek*, Vol III, Skopje, 1976, pp 391- 409 (with notes - regarding sixteenth century data).

Note: C = Christian, M = Muslim, I = Islamicised Christian.

The colonisation and Islamicisation of Debar region (districts of Dolna Reka, Gorna Reka, Mala Reka, Dolna Zhupa and Gorna Zhupa), although not conducted on a mass scale in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, appear to have affected the growth of the Christian population from 1519 to 1583. Whilst there is no record of Islamicisation and colonisation during the 52 years to 1519, there was a substantial increase in the number of Christian inhabitants in the region, a total increase of 489 per cent (795 families). With the onset of Muslim colonisation, albeit on a small scale, and a corresponding growth in Islamicisation, the number of Christians in the region

⁷⁴ Tiho Pole is an unidentifiable village.

⁷⁵ No data recorded for Trnica village in 1519.

⁷⁶ No data recorded for Vidusha village in 1583.

⁷⁷ Volkovija is recorded as a Dervish village.

⁷⁸ Vrbeni was recorded as a Dervish village in 1519.

during the following 64 years to 1583 reduced by 7 per cent (65 families). Large-scale emigration is the most likely explanation for the lack of population growth in the region. Although colonists accounted for only 0.79 per cent of the population in 1519, it could nonetheless be assumed that their presence in the region occasioned great concern. In 1583 from a total population of 1,091 families, colonists accounted for 6.87 per cent of the population whilst Islamicised Christians made up 7.51 per cent of the total.

Islamicised Macedonians did not exclusively appear in villages where colonists settled, although this was more likely. Islamicised Macedonians lived in 9 villages with colonists (69 colonist families to 72 Islamicised Christian families), and ten Islamicised Christians in six villages without colonists. In this sample, colonists appear to have settled in villages located in close proximity to the main route, along the Radika River. Of prominence is the population decrease of Christians in villages where Muslim colonists had settled between the period 1519 and 1583 (for example Rostusha experienced an 85 per cent decrease in its Christian inhabitants, Zhirovnica a 71 per cent decrease and Skudrinje a 65 per cent decrease). The most prominent increase in Christian population occurred in villages where there were no colonists (for example Volkovija experienced a 68 per cent increase in Christian inhabitants, Melnichani and Nistrovo a 51 per cent increase respectively, and Osoj a 50 per cent increase).

Photo 1.1: Zhirovnica village



From the middle of the seventeenth century, the widespread practice of pressuring people to convert to Islam expanded out of the urban centres into the rural sector where most Christians lived. Entire villages and districts were subsequently converted to Islam, bringing great changes to the demographic appearance of Macedonia. General persecution of Christians by the Muslim rulers and a continued deterioration of conditions for the Christian population made life unbearable for many. Islamicisation was often related to heavy economic exploitation by feudal landlords and, in addition, during periods when the Ottoman Empire prepared for war, the Christian population was further burdened by an increase in taxes.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. pp. 93–94.

Taxes were a constant impost for the Christian population. High taxes and their miserable economic condition were factors in encouraging the religious conversion of the Christian population.⁸⁰ The basic tax paid by Christians was known as the *arach*. At the end of the sixteenth century it was increased from 50 to 240 *akchina*, though acceptance of the Muslim religion immediately freed one from the tax.⁸¹ Born in 1908, the Albanian Justruf Metovski believed that in the late nineteenth century, Albanians ‘lived well under Turkish rule, paid less taxes than Christians, and enjoyed greater freedoms’.⁸² Conversion to Islam saw the lifting of oppressive taxes and was a certain method of evading payment of the despised *arach*, the ‘blood tax’.⁸³ Ismail Bojda from the village of Brod confirmed that in the Gora region (Macedonian region of Kosovo - Serbia) ‘oppressive taxes were reduced only when Macedonians accepted Islam’.⁸⁴

Economic exploitation assumed other forms apart from direct taxes. A local Ottoman *valia*, having loaned a village a sum of money that over time they could not afford to repay, offered to forgive them the debt on condition that they accept the Muslim religion.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ C. Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, London, 1965 (1900), p. 248

⁸¹ N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. 43–44. Limanoski adds that the Ottomans further enticed Christians by offering parcels of land in return for conversion to Islam. It is interesting to note that Gypsies constituted a separate category for tax purposes. A single tax collector was assigned the role of collecting taxes from the gypsy population only (both Christian and Muslim). The annual tax bill for 1641 for Christian Gypsies, within the administrative boundaries of the *kadia's* in Ohrid, Bitola, Prilep, Hrupishta, Bihklište, Korcha, Kostur, Serfidzhe, Lerin, Prespa, Struga, Kitchevo and Debar, was 720 *akchina*, whilst for Muslim Gypsies the amount was 650 *akchina*. From an Ottoman Firman dated 12 to 21 February 1641, V. Boshkov, editor, *Turski Dokumenti, Seria I, 1640-1642* [Turkish Documents, Series I, 1640-1642], Vol IV, Skopje, 1972, pp. 55–56.

⁸² Justruf Metovski (born 1908 Resen, Prespa region) interview conducted 23 March 2000 in Bitola.

⁸³ The historian A. Matkovski, *Otporot Protiv Izlamizacija* [Resistance against Islamicisation], Skopje, 1987, p. 40.

⁸⁴ Ismail Bojda interview, op. cit.

⁸⁵ Ismail Bojda interview, op. cit. It was not uncommon for Ottoman officials to loan money either to individuals or to an entire village as a whole. During the mid-seventeenth century, loans of this nature included interest payments that were set at a limit of 11.5 *akchina* returned, for every 10 *akchina* borrowed. From Ottoman Firman dated between 3 to 11 April 1641, V. Boshkov, editor, *Turski Dokumenti, Seria I, 1640-1642* [Turkish Documents, Series I, 1640–1642], Vol IV, Skopje, 1972, pp. 70–71. Ottoman officials did not always abide by the set limit on interest payments, for instance the village of Bukovo borrowed 20,000 *akchina* to be returned over a twelve-month period at 20 per cent interest. From a contract dated 5–14 November 1641. Ibid, pp. 97–98. Loans to villages appear to have been a widespread practice. In 1641, Fatime, the daughter of the Bitola Kadia Kodja, had outstanding loans (with interest) to 54 villages. From a list of monies owed dated 10–19 July 1641, ibid, pp. 85–86.

The unstable political environment of late Ottoman rule saw Macedonian Christians transfer allegiance between various national churches, sometimes more than once (for various reasons outlined in Chapter Three). In central Macedonia, Orthodox Christians adopted Catholicism in the 1880s, but most were to return to Orthodoxy.⁸⁶ Conversely, there are numerous instances of obstacles placed before Christians seeking to transfer adherence between the foreign Orthodox churches (that is, the Patriarchate and the Exarchate), but these were based on political considerations and not due to religious reasons. Once Islamicised, it was extremely difficult to re-convert to Christianity without serious repercussions.⁸⁷ Rare instances are known; a notable example occurring in Galitchnik in the Reka district. Galitchnik was a central Orthodox Christian village in the area with approximately 2,000 inhabitants. Even its remote location could not safeguard the village from the widespread Islamicisation in the district and the wider region. In the middle of the nineteenth century 30 Galitchnik families converted to Islam. In 1843 the headman from the neighbouring village of Lazaropole, Gurchin Kokaleski, with the support of the village headman from Galitchnik, Tomo Tomoski, succeeded in re-converting the Islamicised Christians to their original faith. Gurchin first visited the Islamicised and influential Sinanovci family and presented the following question to the head of the family, ‘what would you do if thirty of your animals were suffering from disease?’ The

⁸⁶ In the 1880s in the central Macedonian region of Gevgelija there were 3,246 Catholic households; by 1888 the bulk of these (2,060 households) had returned to Orthodoxy. From a diplomatic Consular report from the Serb Consul in Solun dated 18 February 1888, K. Dzhambazovski, editor, *Gradnja za Istoriju Makedonskog naroda - iz Arhiva Srbije* [Material on the History of the Macedonian people - from the Serbian Archives], Vol V, Book III, (1888-1889), Belgrade, 1987, pp. 73–75.

⁸⁷ A. Matkovski, 1987, op. cit. p. 54. In order to protect themselves from Ottoman oppression, the Macedonian Christian inhabitants of Radozhda (Struga region) declared themselves Turks and secretly continued Christian worship. Seen as Muslims by the authorities, the men were called upon for military service in the Ottoman armed forces. In order to avoid conscription, they declared that they were in fact Christians. The Ottomans became enraged as they were considered to have discarded Islam (*pochnale da gledat na niv kako na verostapnici*). Sherif *bey* incarcerated the entire village below the ladies’ section of the church of Saint Sofia in Ohrid. The villagers were locked in a dark and damp area, and left for days without food. Local Macedonians of Ohrid, at great risk to themselves, secretly sent food to the tormented prisoners. Disease set in and quickly spread. Many were to die and the Ottomans forbade that bodies be buried in Ohrid, demanding that they be returned to Radozhda. From a total of between 150 to 200 people, only a handful survived. (N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. p. 139.) A unique method utilised by Christians that aimed at resisting Islamicisation involved the tattooing of a cross on a child's forehead at the time of his or her baptism. The tattoo would thus be visibly displayed throughout its life and was particularly popular with the Vlah population. A. Matkovski, 1987, op. cit. p. 44 and M. Minoski, *Osloboditelnite Dvizhenja i Vostanija vo Makedonija 1564–1615* [Liberation Movements and Rebellions in Macedonia 1564–1615], Skopje, 1972, p. 45.

analogy was clear. Soon after the 30 Islamicised families visited the Sveti Jovan Bigorski monastery to be baptised and returned to Christianity.⁸⁸ The significance of re-converting to one's original Christian religion is evident in that this rare event continues to be retold through the form of a traditional Macedonian folk song in the region. The following is a verse from the song:⁸⁹

<i>Kade se chulo, videlo</i>	Where has it been heard, where seen
<i>Turchin vera da menuva</i>	A Turk to change his religion
<i>Vera da menuva</i>	Change his religion
<i>Kaurin da stanuva.</i>	And become a <i>kaurin</i> .

Widespread measures forced upon Christians to convert to Islam included intimidation and violence, even threats of death.⁹⁰ Violent oppression from individual Muslims, officials, bandits and, in rare instances, even the Ottoman military played a part in forcing Christians to accept Islam. There are recorded instances of civilian Turks collectively agitating for the Islamicisation of Christians. In Bitola during January 1731, 'a group of Muslims walked through the streets with drums, attacking Christians, abducting their children and pressuring the *raya* to adopt the Muslim religion and preventing them from freely attending church'.⁹¹ In the Meglen region, a total of twenty-eight villages became Islamicised during the eighteenth century, with Ottoman troops uncharacteristically involved.⁹²

⁸⁸ The story of how 'Galitchnik was saved' was told by Abdula Odzheski during an interview conducted on 25 March 2000 in Zhirovnica. The year 1843, and the names of the village headmen are from A. Matkovski, *Otporot Protiv Izlamizacijata* [Resistance against Islamicisation], Skopje, 1987, pp. 54–56. In addition, Matkovski states that at the time of Islamicisation, the families in question from Galitchnik village adopted Muslim names, and upon their reconversion they replaced these with Christian names – for example, Aliya Sinanovski became Trpko Pakoski and the Yasharevci family became Sharovci. *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁸⁹ A. Matkovski, 1987, *op. cit.* p. 56.

⁹⁰ N. Limanoski, 1989, *op. cit.* p. 76.

⁹¹ A. Matkovski, 1987, *op. cit.* p. 39. Note: Matkovski has obtained this information from an Ottoman Firman - Document B.C. 43, L. 110.

⁹² The historian T. Simovski, *Izlamizacijata vo Tikveshko i Meglensko* [Islamicisation in the Tikvesh and Meglen regions], Skopje, 1984, p. 104. The widely recorded story of Islamicisation in Meglen suggests that Ottoman troops surrounded the church building on Easter Sunday after the Christians had gathered for the service, whereupon bishop Ilarion first accepted Islam and encouraged the church adherents to follow his path (*ibid*, pp. 103–104). The late nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnographer and historian, I. Ivanich, adds another perspective to the mass Islamicisation in the Meglen region. Ivanich claimed that the Ottoman army surrounded the church on Easter Sunday at the instigation of the Patriarchate church. As Islamicisation in Meglen occurred in the late eighteenth century, after the abolishment of the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Patriarchate church had yet to practically incorporate the 'rebellious' Meglen region into its jurisdiction. Ivanich

Added pressure to accept Islam came from Muslim Albanians who spread into Western Macedonia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹³ Armed Albanian bandits (known as *Katchatci*) operated in the western regions of Macedonia. Groups of up to 150 men, from May to September each year in the late nineteenth century, brought misery to unarmed Christian villages.⁹⁴ The most affected regions were Debar, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kitchevo and Ohrid.⁹⁵ Albanian bandits engaged in a notorious annual autumnal practice of kidnapping people, usually children, and holding them until a ransom was paid.⁹⁶ In October 1894, the band of Karabadzhakot kidnapped two young children aged 10 and 14 from the village of Dupeni (Prespa region). The father of the children, Duljan, was instructed to pay 500 Turkish lira for their return, an enormous amount that a poor villager could never obtain. After selling his possessions he raised 50 lira and borrowed another 100. The money bought back his youngest son's life, but the elder son was killed and his head sent to the father.⁹⁷ Having travelled through Macedonia at the beginning of the twentieth century, the English journalist and commentator H.N. Brailsford referred to this practice as an 'addiction', particularly with the Albanian tribes of Debar.⁹⁸

suggests than rather than going over to the Patriarchate, Bishop Ilarion converted to Islam, together with his people (*Ilarion se reshbi, da se poturchi zajedno so svojim narodom*) and that he did this as 'a protest against the abolishment of the Ohrid church and firmly represents the intense dislike Macedonians have for Greeks and the Greek Patriarchate' (*on ostaje ipak najrechitiji protest protiv ukidanja Oridski crkve I najjachi dokaz koliko cy Makedonci mrzeli Grke I Grchky Patriarshiji*). I. Ivanich, *Makedonija i Makedonci* [Macedonia and Macedonians], Vol II, Novi Sad, 1908, pp. 378–380. The Meglen region has been renamed as the Aridea region by the Greek government following its occupation of southern Macedonia.

⁹³ J. Hadzhivasilevich, 1924, op. cit. p. 65

⁹⁴ The historian G. Todorovski, *Malorekanskiot Predel* [The Mala Reka district], Skopje, 1970, pp. 98–99. The contemporary commentator I. Ivanov stated that Albanian bandits travelled in groups of 300–400 men in Western Macedonia. *Polozhenieto na Blgarite v Makedonia* [The situation of the Bulgarians in Macedonia], Sofia, 1895, p. 35.

⁹⁵ I. Ivanov, op. cit. pp. 34–36.

⁹⁶ The revolutionary leader, Slaveyko Arsov (from the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation), outlines some of the most notorious culprits of the practice – Tafo in the Porech-Kitchevo region, Islam Onbashija in the Kitchevo region, Tair-Tolo in the Struga region and Bizhal in the Bigla district, amongst others. I. Katardzhiev, editor, *Spomeni - S. Arsov, P. Klashev, L. Dzherov, G.P. Hristov, A. Andreev, G. Papanchev, L. Dimitrov*. [Memoirs - S. Arsov, P. Klashev, L. Dzherov, G.P. Hristov, A. Andreev, G. Papanchev, L. Dimitrov], Skopje, 1997, p. 60.

⁹⁷ D. Dimeski, *Priliki vo Bitolskiot Vilayet vo 1894 i 1895 godina* [Characteristics of the Bitola Vilayet in 1894 and 1895], Skopje, 1981, p. 139. Albanians have a notorious reputation for engaging in the practice of demanding ransom payments in return for one's child or family member. This practice continued during the 1920s and 1930s and most recently was used by Albanian terrorists against Macedonians in Western Macedonia during the 2001 war in the Republic of Macedonia.

⁹⁸ H.N. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future*, London, 1905, p. 49.

Exorbitant ransom demands forced families to sell their land and stock to buy back their children.⁹⁹ Cattle and sheep were forcibly taken from families and usually offered back to the dispossessed at a price. The village *kmet* (headman) of Galitchnik maintained a record of Albanian crime against the village during the period 1877–1880 and emphasised that wealthy sheep farmers were specifically targeted by the gangs. Individuals lost entire flocks of 3,500–4,000 sheep, and often the bandits offered to sell the sheep back to the farmers.¹⁰⁰

Albanian banditry was not restricted to the northwestern regions of Macedonia; there are numerous recorded instances of similar activities throughout other regions. For instance, a *Firman* from 1712 sent to the kadi of Serfidzhe, Lerin, Bitola, Prilep, Veles, Kitchevo, Prespa, Kostur, Naselitch, Hrupishte and Grevena, warned them of Albanian bandits consisting of between 300 and 500 men who were stealing stock and murdering individuals.¹⁰¹ Although constituting a small minority of all Bitola region settlements, some Albanian villages openly stole from their Christian neighbours.¹⁰² One informant, Vane Tancevski of Lopatica, was aware that Albanians from the neighbouring villages of Drevenik and Crnoec

increased their stock holdings by plundering ours. They would come to steal a ram or other animals, what could you do? You would say lucky they didn't take them all. Albanians were armed and protected by the ruling Muslim regime [*sic*]. Our people were unarmed with no form of protection.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 49–50. For examples of entire villages forced to make collective ransom payments, see the Report by Serbian Metropolitan Polikarp of the Debar-Veles Eparchy, number 109, dated 23 February 1903 from L. Lape, editor, *Izveshtaj od 1903 godina na Srpskite Konsuli, Mitropoliti i Uchilishni Inspektori vo Makedonija* [Report of 1903 of Serb Consuls, Metropolitans and School Inspectors in Macedonia], Skopje, 1954, pp. 114–121.

¹⁰⁰ G. Todorovski, 1970, op. cit. pp. 97–99.

¹⁰¹ *Firman* dated 3rd to 12th September 1712, drawn from A. Matkovski, editor, *Turski izvori za Ajdutstvo i Aramistvo vo Makedonija 1700-1725* [Turkish sources regarding haiduts and bandits in Macedonia, 1700–1725], Book III, Skopje, 1973, pp. 97–98. (Also see document number 94 on p. 88, *ibid*). The following towns have been renamed by the Greek government in the 1920s: Serfidzhe to Servia, Lerin to Florina, Kostur to Kastoria, Naselitch to Siatista and Hrupishte to Argos Orestikon.

¹⁰² Of the 135 villages in the Bitola region, Albanians inhabited 10 villages - 5 exclusively Albanian and 5 villages shared with Macedonians. See table 3.4 in Chapter three.

¹⁰³ Vane Tanchevski (born 1935 in Lopatica village, Bitola region) interview conducted on 6 March 2002 in Melbourne. Vane Tanchevski added that according to the old folk in the village, in the past, Lopatica had two monasteries, both destroyed by Albanian bandits. It is believed the destruction of the monasteries occurred in the early nineteenth century and that the perpetrators were from the neighbouring villages of Crnoec and Drevenik. According to a traditional Macedonian folk song with roots in the northwestern Tetovo region, the Ottoman used Albanians in their attack upon churches and monasteries. The song 'Sardisale Leshochkiot

Similarly, the three upper district Albanian villages of Zlokukani, Ostec and Kishava made life difficult for all the surrounding Macedonian Christian villages.

They were known to kidnap children and hold them to ransom, they knew which families had money and specifically targeted them.¹⁰⁴ On one occasion at the beginning of the 1900s a group of men from Graeshnica were forcibly taken (by armed Albanians) whilst gathering wood in the forest above the village. Between 50 100 gold coins was demanded for the release of each individual.¹⁰⁵

Entire villages were plundered and held for ransom and it was not uncommon for Macedonian Christian villages to hand over money as a result of extortion demands.¹⁰⁶ During 1901 and 1902 the village of Nikiforovo (Gostivar Region) paid 111 Turkish lira to nine separate Albanian bandits in a period of less than twelve months. However, the total economic damage to the village (which contained 50 homes), including burned homes and outer buildings, as well as ransoms paid for kidnapped children, amounted to approximately 400 Turkish lira.¹⁰⁷ Financial payments to bandits from villages held for ransom was known as *sursa*, an impost that the historian Dimeski describes as a 'bandit tax'.¹⁰⁸

Further examples include the village of Inche (Porech district) that was held to ransom in August 1894 by the bandit leader Sefer and forced to pay 90 Turkish lira. In February 1895 the village of Drenovci (Prilep region) was similarly held to ransom

manastir' suggests that an angry Kuzum Pasha unleashed Albanians from the village Slatino to set fire to the famous monastery in Leshok village. L. Dimkaroski, *Makedonski Biseri, 150 narodni pesni* [Macedonian Pearls, 150 folk songs], Ljubljana, 1993, p. 118. During the military conflict of 2001 in Macedonia, with the use of explosives, Albanian terrorists destroyed the historically and religiously significant monastery for the second time. The destruction of Christian places of worship and cultural monuments was widespread in Kosovo following United Nations administration of the Serbian province. Albanians have attempted to wipe out all trace of Serbian Orthodox existence. A similar strategy was undertaken in parts of western Macedonia during 2001, with numerous centuries-old churches and monasteries destroyed and vandalised.

¹⁰⁴ Stojan Spasevski (born 1922 in Graeshnica village, Bitola region) interview conducted 30 March 1999 and 18 February 2002 in Melbourne. Stojan added that this practice continued into the period from the end of the Second Balkan War (1913) to the commencement of the Second World War in 1940 when Macedonia was occupied by Nazi Germany.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ I. Ivanov, 1895, op. cit. p. 35; G. Abadzhiev, op. cit. p. 12; and the Report by Serbian Metropolitan Polikarp of the Debar-Veles Eparchy, number 109 dated 23 February 1903 from L. Lape, editor, op. cit. pp. 114–121.

¹⁰⁷ Report No 109, dated 23 February 1903 by the Serb Metropolitan Polikarp of the Debar-Veles Eparchy, from L. Lape, editor, op. cit. pp. 119–121.

¹⁰⁸ D. Dimeski, 1981, op. cit. p. 140.

by the bandit leader Rasim and forced to pay 300 Turkish lira. In the summer of 1894 the bandit leader Sefer gathered 1000 grosh for himself and 1050 grosh for his brother Velija from each household in the village of Zvechan (Porech region). It was the third time the village had paid a tax to the bandits in three years. In autumn of the same year the bandits sought to extract a fourth payment from the village, and, unable to immediately pay, the villagers pleaded for more time but were refused. Anticipating a bandit attack, the villagers together with their children slept in the woods overnight for two weeks. Sefer arrived one evening with his band and found the village deserted. Enraged, he set fire to 22 homes and many outer buildings. Eleven families left Zvechan after this event (Petre Jovanov, Zmejko Sadev, Phillip Stojchev, Josif Bozhin, Karafile Zdravkov, Trpe Bogatinov, Ivan Hristov, Korun Trpev, Angelko Todorov, Janko Vanev and Isaiha Stolev).¹⁰⁹

The level of authority exerted by the bandits economically impacted upon entire districts. For instance, in the Demir Hisar and Kitchevo regions, many villages were to fall under the economic bondage of the Albanian bandit whose *nom de guerre* was Remko.¹¹⁰ In the Porech region a group of six Macedonian Christian villages under the oppression of the Albanian bandit, Ibish, could not conduct a wedding ceremony without his approval, and had to make a payment to him before the wedding could occur.¹¹¹ The economic position of the Macedonian Christians in western Macedonia was significantly deteriorating and the general lawlessness made their situation helpless.¹¹² Pressures from armed Albanian bandits and colonising

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 140–141.

¹¹⁰ G. Abadzhiev, op. cit. p. 12.

¹¹¹ Ibish also took possession of all six village seals. D. Dimeski, 1981, op. cit. p. 142.

¹¹² The IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation) responded by targeting specific Albanian bandits for execution. But this could bring further retribution against innocent Macedonian Christian villages. Under the direction of the IMRO, villagers from Dobrenoec (Porech district) liquidated the notorious Albanian bandit, Zulko, together with three of his cronies. Their bodies were carefully concealed in order to avoid further violence aimed at the village. Abdulraman *beg* of Debar town was directly involved in the economic bondage of numerous Christian villages in the region. A plan was drawn up which involved kidnapping the high-profile *beg* and extracting a ransom for his release which would go towards the IMRO treasury. Information received by the IMRO indicated that Abdulraman was carrying 2,000 Lira to purchase a *chiflik* in Prilep. He was captured by an IMRO *cheta* at the crossroads between the Debar and Kitchevo regions in 1899, but was found to be carrying only 150–160 Lira. He was duly executed, along with four *agi* who travelled with

Muslim Ottomans created an environment of intimidation, terror and violence which could only be appeased through Islamicisation or emigration.

Converting to the new religion was promoted by the Ottomans as offering a 'better life', and the enticement of the privileged class that could be entered through the acceptance of the new religion was convincing.¹¹³ Some Christian women married Muslims in order to escape their miserable economic existence. During the late eighteenth century in certain areas, local Ottoman authorities aimed at encouraging the process of Islamicisation by exempting Muslims from military service as a reward for marrying Christian women.¹¹⁴ The ethnographer J. Hadzhivasilevich observed that Christian women who married Muslim men chose Islamicised Christians usually from the same village, thereby avoiding having to adopt a new language.¹¹⁵

During the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, forced conversions were aimed at individuals rather than groups. Most vulnerable were young women who faced kidnap and Islamicisation by Muslim Turks and Albanians. Trajanka Talevska, born in the village of Vrajnevc, explained that in the Bitola region 'young girls were locked inside their homes when Turks came by the village for fear of being kidnapped'.¹¹⁶ In Krushevica (Mariovo district of Prilep) local traditional costumes worn by women were colourful and predominantly red in colour, whilst older women dressed in black. Due to a constant threat of kidnap and Islamicisation

him. Neither the Debar or Kitchevo region authorities accepted responsibility for the incident. Albanian bandits recognised that the *beg* and *agi* were not murdered by Albanians due to the manner of the massacre. The Albanian bandit Ramduka together with his band extracted revenge upon the village of Lazaropole, by murdering the village *kmet* (headman) Bosko, together with six young men. Later the village of Dushegubice was punished by Ramduka and his band of approximately 100 men. Forty homes were destroyed by fire, and three villagers murdered – an elderly man, a woman and an eleven-year-old child. G. Abadzhiev, op. cit. pp. 12–13.

¹¹³ C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 248.

¹¹⁴ J. Hadzhivasilevich, *Muslimani nashje krvje vo Juzhnoj Srbiji* [Muslims of our blood in Southern Serbia], Belgrade, 1924, p. 71.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 72-73.

¹¹⁶ Trajanka Talevska (born 1925 in Vrajnevc village, Bitola region) interview conducted 10 March 2000 in Novaci. Trajanka Talevska stated that she recalled hearing these stories from her mother and other older women in the village. Similar responses were received during interviews conducted with Mara Tanchevska (born 1923 in Sekirani village Bitola region) interview conducted 6 March 2002 in Melbourne and Dragica Kleshteva (born 1934 in Vrajnevc village, Bitola region) interview conducted 1 November 1999 in Melbourne.

of young girls, the local Macedonian revolutionary authorities ordered that all women regardless of age wear black when in the fields outside of the village in order not to attract attention from potential Turkish kidnappers.¹¹⁷ According to a 1903 Serbian Metropolitan report, Albanians in the Kitchevo region kidnapped and forcefully converted a young girl from the village of Dvorca, a young girl from Svetoracha, a young girl from Leshnice, and a woman from Lupshta.¹¹⁸ Young girls and women once kidnapped and placed in the harem of an Albanian bandit leader were forced to accept Islam upon threat of a cruel death. The threat of death would often extend to a husband, brothers, and even her entire family.¹¹⁹

In the mixed Macedonian Christian and Turkish Muslim village of Dolenci (Bitola region) in 1909, Veljan Altiparmak was attacked by a knife-wielding Turkish villager who intended to murder him and take his wife Trena as his own. Veljan immediately left the village after the attack and Trena followed with their six children after another Turkish villager advised them to 'leave for Bitola otherwise he (*the attacker*) will kill your children'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Zora Dimovska (born 1937 Krushevica village, Prilep part of the Mariovo district) recalled hearing this story from her mother. Notes of interview, Melbourne 21 January 2000.

¹¹⁸ Report by Serbian Metropolitan Polikarp of the Debar-Veles Eparchy, number 109 dated 23 February 1903, from L. Lape, editor, op. cit. pp. 116–117. The Serb ethnographer, J. Hadzhivasilevich also confirms that Albanians kidnapped Christian girls in order to Islamicise them in the Kitchevo region. Menka from Shutovo was kidnapped in 1860, and Mara Vasileva from Srbjani in 1879. These particular instances are unusual because both were returned to their families after refusing Islamicisation and after a concerted effort to free them by their villages. J. Hadzhivasilevich, 1924, op. cit. pp. 67–68.

¹¹⁹ The French Member of Parliament, George Beri, from a sitting of the French Parliament on 10 March 1903 (Parliamentary Hansard). M. Pandevski, op. cit. pp. 83–84.

¹²⁰ Vasko Altiparmak (born 1912 in Bitola) interview conducted in Bitola on 30 March 2000. Veljan Altiparmak was Vasko's grandfather. It is interesting to note that the surname Altiparmak is not a traditional Macedonian name but is based on a nickname given to his grandfather, Veljan, who was born with six fingers on each hand. The Turkish word for six is *alti* and the word for finger is *parmak*. Vasko Altiparmak is the retired former director of the Yugoslav National Bank in Bitola.

Photo 1.2: Velebrdo Village



That Muslim men were prepared to go to extreme lengths in order to Islamicise young girls and women is further evidenced by an event which became an international incident in 1876. Stefana, a young Macedonian girl from Bogdantsi (Gevgelija region) was kidnapped and pressured to accept Islam in order that she marry a rich Turkish bey in Solun. Upon her arrival at the Solun railway station the German Consul (H. Abot), intervened and provided Stefana with safe shelter in his residence. The incident became the occasion for mass protests by a fanatical Muslim mob that demanded that Stefana be returned to them at all costs. The French and German Consuls, Moulin and Abot, went to the Mosque to speak to the Muslims who had gathered there, and were brutally murdered.¹²¹ The kidnapping of girls and

¹²¹ The historian, M. Pandevski, *Macedonia and the Macedonians in the Eastern Crisis*, Skopje, 1978, pp. 147–148.

women by Muslims was considered cruelly barbaric and the bitterness caused by such acts drove deep wedges between Christian and Muslim communities.¹²²

Probably the most famous case involving the attempted abduction and Islamicisation of a Macedonian Christian girl was that of Kalesh Anga, in the Mariovo district of the Bitola region. Kalesh Anga chose death before Islamicisation, throwing herself off a cliff top whilst fleeing from her would-be Turkish abductors.¹²³ This practice of Muslims kidnapping Christian girls was widespread enough, indeed, to warrant its inclusion as a 'strictly forbidden practice' in Article 166 (Civil Administration section) of the Constitution of the Macedonian Rebel Committee during the Macedonian Kresna Uprising of 1878.¹²⁴

Some of our best sources for this forced conversion are interviews and folk songs, but Islamicisation does not occupy a prominent place in the oral culture. Stories appear to be rarely passed down in the Mala Reka district, for instance. According to Abdula Odzheski from the exclusively Macedonian Muslim village of Zhirovnica, 'the old folk never spoke about the Islamicisation of our forefathers, as though it was something to be ashamed of'.¹²⁵ Young males in the village were also conscious that stories of Islamicisation were not being passed down to them; however, it is common knowledge to all that they were once Christians.¹²⁶ Older villagers are aware that the last remaining Christian in the village during the process of Islamicisation was Priest Kiril. Unable to save the village, Priest Kiril finally left in

¹²² Stories of Islamicisation occurring as a result of kidnapping appear to have been widespread. Many such stories have been handed down through traditional Macedonian folk songs. See T. Bicevski, *Makedonski Narodni Pesni od Vodensko* [Macedonian National Folk Songs from the Voden region], Skopje, 1989, pp. 51–68.

¹²³ The story was immortalised by Stale Popov (born 1902), from the village of Melnica in the Mariovo district in the book *Kalesh Anga* (first published 1953). The large cliff top rock from where Kalesh Anga threw herself is known as *Momin Kamen* ('young girl's rock') and is visible from the road leading up to Makovo from the Bitola district.

¹²⁴ 'Rules of the Macedonian Rebel Committee', from H. Andonov-Polyanski, editor, *Documents on the Struggle of the Macedonian People for Independence and a Nation-State*, Vol I, Skopje, 1985 p. 280.

¹²⁵ A. Odzheski interview, op. cit.

¹²⁶ The writer spoke to several young males in a village café in their late teens and early twenties and it was apparent that none were aware how the village became Muslim. One respondent stated that 'this matter is not discussed, although we are aware that our ancestors were Christians'.

1864 and moved to Debar where he changed his surname to Zharnovski, in commemoration of his native village.

As in Zhirovnica, Redzho Muslioski from the village of Dolno Kosovrasti (predominantly Muslim with a minority group of Macedonian Christian inhabitants) stated he did not know when the village was Islamicised and that stories were not passed down regarding Islamicisation of the village. He was, however, aware that religious conversions were conducted family-by-family, ‘because there have always been native Macedonians in the village of the Christian faith’.¹²⁷

By contrast, people living on the eastern slopes of the Shar and Koritnik Mountains of the Gora region have vivid memories of Islamicisation captured in traditional storytelling. The eminent ethnographer of Macedonian Muslims, Limanoski, cites an interview with a Macedonian Muslim from the Gora region speaking of Islamicisation:

We know from the old people who told us that we were once Christians (*'kauri'*), but we were forced through hardship to become Muslim (*'poturchile'*). Our children were forcibly taken and circumcised. Adult men were forced to accept the Muslim religion (*'poturchat'*). Upon returning from *pechalba*, a husband called his wife Safio, although her real name was Sofia. She began tearing her hair out of grief ... Sofia, who later became Safia, was from Rushanica. When the Turks left the village she rejoiced and danced.¹²⁸

Ismail Bojda, from the village of Brod, in the Gora region, believed that the region was Islamicised much later than the Reka district and that this had some impact upon the memories of the process of Islamicisation. Due to different periods of Islamicisation in the two regions, variations of traditions and customs are noticeable,

¹²⁷ Redzho Muslioski (born 1946 in Dolno Kosovrasti, Debar region) interview conducted 27 March 2000 in Dolno Kosovrasti.

Today the inhabitants of Dolno Kosovrasti are entirely Macedonians of the Muslim religion, the few remaining Macedonian Christian families moved to Skopje in at the end of the twentieth century.

¹²⁸ *'Znaeme od stari koi ni kazhuale deka sme bile kauri, ama so zorle sme poturchile. Decata gi zemale od sokacite I gi suneticivale. Mazhi zemvale I so zort da gi poturchat. Edna zhenata bila Sofia i koga i doshol mazhot od gurbet, vlegol doma i na zhenata i vikala Safio. Ona fatila kosa da kubet I od zhalost I gi iskinala ... Zenata sbto se vikala Sofia a posle Safiabila Rushanica. Koga si zaminale Turcite od ovde taa se raduala i igrala.'* N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. pp. 46–47.

and far more cultural similarities between the traditions maintained in the Gora region and those celebrated by Macedonian Orthodox Christians. Generally people in the Gora region have some idea when their families became Muslim, as most have an awareness of their family genealogy. The Bojda family is able to trace Islamicisation back five generations:¹²⁹

Ismail	born 1953
Imer	born 1927
Ismail	born 1890
Bajram	born 1865
Alija	born 1840
<i>Bogdan</i>	born 1815

The name Bogdan is Christian, indicating that the moment of Islamicisation occurred in the 1820s or 1830s.

Five centuries of Ottoman rule saw various levels of systematic colonisation and Islamicisation result in significant demographic modifications to the ethnic and religious make-up of Macedonia. In the northwestern regions there was a gradual process of Macedonian Christians leaving their villages because of the daily insecurity caused by Muslim colonisers, and especially by armed Albanians, who were the primary source of intimidation for unarmed Christians. Macedonian Christians in Debar and in other regions (such as Tetovo and Gostivar) were compelled to migrate, establishing new isolated settlements or resettling into existing Christian villages. In the 1890s Sushnica in the Dolna Reka district was made up of approximately 30 Christian households.¹³⁰ Approximately 120–130 years earlier, the entire village population deserted their homes and resettled in the villages of Krushovo (Prilep region) and Smilevo (Bitola region), due to injustices perpetrated by Muslim bandits. Over time a number of villagers returned, re-establishing their homes in a less accessible location in Mala Reka. Partially erect walls of former homes continued to stand in the original village during the 1890s and the town became known as *Stara*

¹²⁹ Ismail Bojda interview, op. cit.

¹³⁰ S.T. Chaparoski document, op. cit. p. 5.

Sushnica ('Old Sushnica') or *Staro Selo* ('old village').¹³¹ The new location was no doubt adopted due to security concerns, as it sat at 1,420 metres above sea level, making it the second highest village in the Mala Reka district following Galitchnik (1,520 metres - another Macedonian Christian village).¹³² Terrorised villagers sometimes left Macedonia altogether and migrated to the neighbouring free Christian Balkan States of Serbia and Bulgaria.¹³³

The Reka districts of Dolna, Mala and Golema were affected by Islamicisation but not colonisation (see Table 1.3) whilst Gorna Zhupa saw mass colonisation with little Islamicisation (see Table 1.4). Surrounding districts similarly appear to have distinguishing characteristics. At the end of the nineteenth century in the Gorna Reka district villages, a corrupted form of Albanian was spoken by both Muslims and Christians alike. It was neither the language of their forefathers, nor their mother tongue, but a mixture of Albanian and Macedonian words, making the language unique and comprehensible only among themselves.¹³⁴ Traditional clothing (*ruket*) in the district is identical between both Christians and Muslims.¹³⁵ Of the 25 villages in the district, five were exclusively Muslim, four exclusively Christian (two with churches) and sixteen mixed Muslim-Christian villages (ten with churches).¹³⁶ The Ottomans advocated a religious adherence, not ethnic assimilation, so it was rare for a Macedonian Muslim village to discard its age-old customs, traditions and mother tongue.

¹³¹ Ibid, pp. 5–6.

¹³² The third highest situated village in Mala Reka district was the Christian village of Gari at 1,170 metres. M. Panov, *Enciklopedija na selata vo Republika Makedonija* [Encyclopaedia of the villages of the Republic of Macedonia], Skopje, 1998.

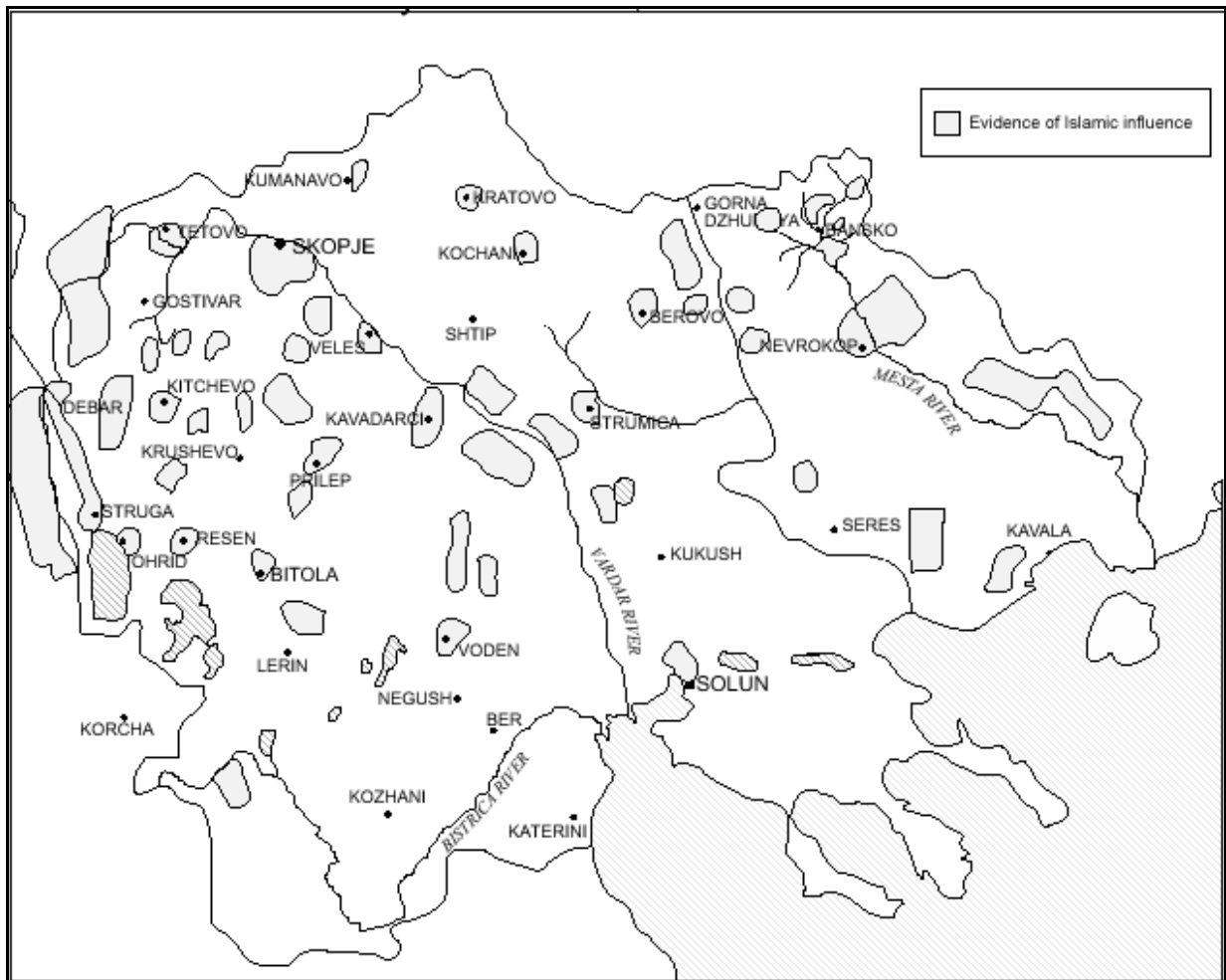
¹³³ V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 389. In the 1880s Vasil Ginoski, from Galitchnik, violently injured a Turk and was able to leave after buying his freedom. He moved to Podgorica in Montenegro where he was later united with Teofil and Alekso Ginoski. H. Polenakovic, *Panajot K. Ginoski*, no place or date of publication, p. 242. In certain instances, individuals would retaliate in some form and consequently be forced to flee. For example, the Tchkorlevci family originally came from the Veles region during distant Ottoman rule. Over a number of generations the Tchkorlevci men killed nine Turks in nine separate locations whilst moving from one district to another before eventually settling in Vrajnevci village on the outskirts of Pelagonia Plain (bordering the Mariovo district). Atanas Vasilevski (born 1928 in Vrajnevci village, Bitola region) interview conducted 16 March 2000 in Bitola.

¹³⁴ Chaparoski document, op. cit. p. 11.

¹³⁵ Ibid, pp. 11–12.

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp. 12–15.

Figure 1.2: Macedonian localities affected by Islamicisation, 1400–1900



Unlike the Ottoman Turks, Albanians were known for their assimilatory propensity.¹³⁷ The movement of Albanians into Macedonian Muslim villages saw a gradual Albanianisation occur.¹³⁸ The villages of Ostreni, Trnovo, Klene, Leten, Dzhepitsa, Brbele, Obuki, Makelari and others were largely Albanianised by the end of the nineteenth century.¹³⁹ Where Albanians moved into Christian villages, it was common for Macedonians to leave. In the middle of the nineteenth century the Debar villages of Vichica, Goleica and Pisanki were exclusively Christian; by the end

¹³⁷ It is interesting to note that Macedonians, be they of the Christian or Muslim religion, were not renowned for assimilating other ethnic groups.

¹³⁸ S. Gopchevich, *Stara Srbija i Makedonija* [Old Serbia and Macedonia], Belgrade, 1890, pp. 206-207; J. Hadzhivasilevich, 1924, op. cit. pp. 29-30; N. Limanoski, 1993, op. cit. p. 124; and, V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 388.

¹³⁹ V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 388.

of the century they had become exclusively Albanian.¹⁴⁰ In Grazhdani Albanians arrived in the 1850s. By 1900 there remained only eight Christian homes: the ethnographer, V. Kanchov, declared in 1900 that they 'will soon leave too'.¹⁴¹ Migrating Albanians overran entire districts in the frontier Debar region (Grika, Luzunija, Dolno Debar) with the only remnants of the original Macedonian inhabitants being the obviously typical Macedonian toponyms.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 388.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 388

¹⁴² Chaparoski document, op. cit. p. 27.

Similarly, J. Hadzhivasilevich stated that toponyms in the Dolni Debar district generally remained unchanged and in villages taken over by the expanding Albanian population by the middle of the twentieth century it became common that toponyms became Albanianized. J. Hadzhivasilevich, *Grad Debar y vreme oslobodzhenja 1912 g.* [Debar during the period of liberation in 1912], Belgrade, 1940, p. 35.

Table 1.3: Ethnic and Religious Composition of Mala and Dolna Reka District Villages, circa 1900

Village	Inhabitants		Grazing land in hectares	Agric. land in hectares	Forests in Hectares	Metres Above Sea level
	MC	MM				
Adzhievci		MM	44	18	89	760
Bitushe	MC		210	70	287	954
Boletin		MM	N/A	N/A	N/A	820
Galitchnik	MC		5313	2	770	1,520
Gari	MC		2018	33	1,417	1,170
Kosovrasti D	MC	MM	151	28	498	625
Kosovrasti G	MC	MM	198	86	374	1,040
Lazaropole	MC		1,120	159	3,272	1,300
Melnichani D	MC		40	20	255	740
Melnichani G	MC		N/A	N/A	N/A	940
Mogorche		MM	270	176	740	1,020
Osoj	MC		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Prisojnica		MM	96	38	189	820
Rosoki	MC		N/A	N/A	N/A	980
Rostusha	MC	MM	261	63	1,109	720
Selce	MC		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Skudrinje		MM	103	78	617	940
Sushica	MC		N/A	N/A	N/A	1,410
Trebishte	MC	MM	358	120	1,014	940
Tresonche	MC		2,684	26	851	1,000
Velebrdo	MC	MM	296	61	336	840
Vidusha		MM	38	52	615	1,110
Yanche	MC	MM	27	31	469	760
Zhirovnica		MM	1,361	195	1,364	900

Sources and notes: Data compiled in the Reka district during field research conducted March 2000; S.T. Chaparoski, *Mesnost(ite) od Debarskoto okružhie*, Document number NR54; V. Kanchov, *Makedonija Etnografija i Statistika*, Sofia, 1970 (1900); J. Hadzhivasilevich, *Muslimani Nashe Krvi u Juzhnoj Srbiji*, Belgrade, 1924; and, M. Panov, *Enciklopedija na selata vo Republika Makedonija*, Skopje, 1998.

Note: MM signifies Macedonian Muslim inhabitants and MC signifies Macedonian Christians. In each instance where a village contains both religious groups one is highlighted and this signifies that it made up the majority group in the village.

The total population of the Mala and Dolna Reka districts in 1900 amounted to 12,015 Christians and 6,565 Muslims according to V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit.

Figure 1.3: Religious composition of Macedonian villages in the Dolna/Mala Reka district, circa 1900

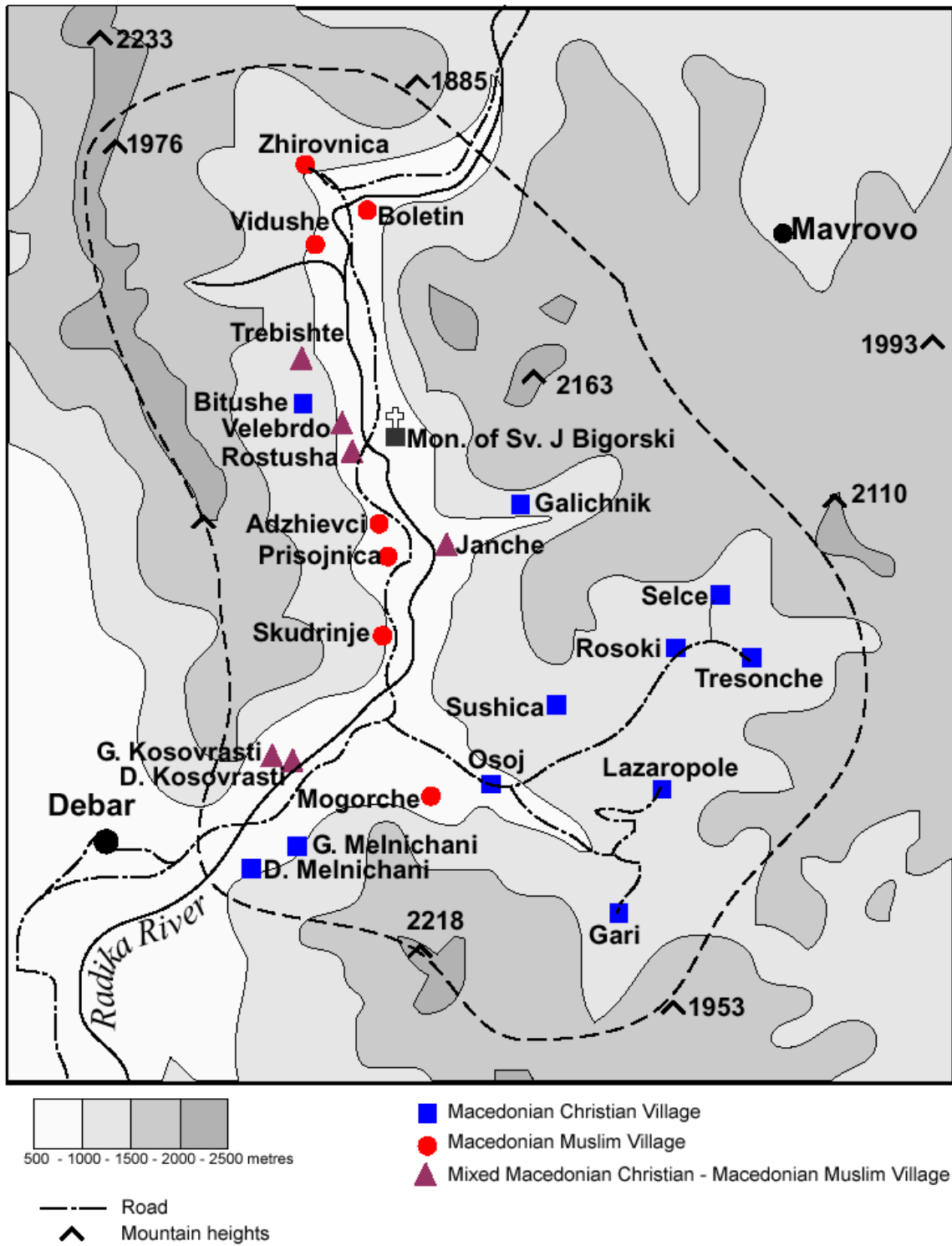


Table 1.4: Ethnic and Religious Composition of Gorna Zhupa District, circa 1890s

GORNA ZHUPA DISTRICT - DEBAR REGION CIRCA 1890's			
Village	Turks	Macedonian Muslim	Macedonian Christian
Breshani	35-38 homes		
Dolgash	10-12 homes		
Dolgash			7-8 homes
Elevci Dolno		40 homes	15 homes
Elevci Gorno	160 homes		10 homes
Evla			
Kochishta	55 homes		Up to 20 homes
Kodzhadzhik	600-650 homes		
Novaci	70 homes		
Osolnica	40 homes		
Osolnica			45-50 homes
Prelenik	70 homes		1 home
Selce			100-110 homes
TOTALS:	1,040-1,095 homes	40 homes	198-214 homes

Source and notes: S.T. Chaparoski, *Mesnosti(te) od Debarskoto okruzhie*, Document number NR54. Chaparoski notes that there was a church in the villages of Kochishta and Selce respectively. The last Christians left Kodzhadzhik in the 1820s. Osolnica is tabulated twice as two separate villages in close proximity to one another (a half-hour walk from one another).¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Osolnica is also mentioned twice in published statistical data based on the 'bedel-i askeriye' tax of 1873. The Christian-inhabited Osolnica is recorded as 'Osolnica', whilst the Turkish-inhabited Osolnica as 'Turko Osolnica' ('Turkish Osolnica'). J. Jordanov, editor, *Makedonia i Odrinsko Statistika na Naselenieto ot 1873 g.* [Macedonia and Adrianople Population Statistics from 1873], Sofia, 1995, p.177. The 1995 publication is a reprint of the original French language 1878 publication, the reprinted version appears in French and Bulgarian. Original title - *Ethnographie des Vilayets D'Adrianople, De Monastir et de Salonique*, Constantinople, 1878.

1.2. Religion and nationality

IT WAS NOT a sense of ethnicity or nationalism driving the Ottoman Empire, but religion. ‘Their law was a religious code, their army a force which conquered in the name of a faith.’¹⁴⁴ Basic categories in the Ottoman Empire were based on religious groups. There were Muslims, the ‘believers’, and others, the ‘non-believers’. Ottoman society was organised according to religion, and as everyone necessarily belonged to a religious community, all citizens were considered to be a part of a ‘nationality’ known as *millet*. Prior to 1870 the Ottomans recognised only two millets in the Balkans, the *Rumi millet*, which consisted of all Orthodox Christians, and the Muslim *millet*, to which all Muslims belonged. As the only recognised Christian church in the Ottoman Balkans prior to 1870 (the Macedonian autocephalous Archbishopric of Ohrid was abolished in 1767), the Greek-controlled Constantinople Patriarchate was the official head of all Orthodox Christians. Adherents were thus labelled as belonging to the Rumi millet (also known as *Roum* or *Rum millet*). Consequently, in the official language of Turkish bureaucracy, a common racial name was given to all Orthodox Christians and Muslims respectively, with only two nationalities officially recognised – ‘Greeks’ (*Roum millet*) and ‘Turks’ (Muslim *millet*).¹⁴⁵ Later, with the intensification of Balkan rivalry over Macedonia (1870–1912), and the official recognition of other Orthodox Churches, new *millets* or ‘nationalities’ were recognised.

Politically perceived as denoting nationality, church affiliation incorrectly implied an attachment to the corresponding national state. For instance, when the Bulgarians and Serbs established their churches (as well as the Romanian church, aimed at Vlachs), new *millets* were recognised, and suddenly new ‘nationalities’ emerged in Macedonia. Religious or sectarian identification from a Christian perspective based

¹⁴⁴ H.N. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future*, London, 1906, p. 62.

¹⁴⁵ *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, Washington, 1914, p. 22. G.M. Mackenzie and A.P. Irby wrote ‘throughout Turkey in Europe the name "Turk" is used to express a Mahometan; the name "Greek" to denote a Christian of the Eastern church’. *Op. cit.* pp. xxiii–xxiv. A Bulgarian millet was later recognised (in 1872), corresponding with the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate church.

on church adherence did not necessarily correspond to ethnic identification. In fact, Christian church adherence was at times fluid, with allegiance transferred from one national church to another ‘as necessary’ (to protect life and property). Subjected to an intense political rivalry between the Greek, Serb and Bulgarian churches, Macedonian Christians could therefore, theoretically, be recognised under the Ottoman *millet* system as belonging to the ‘Greek’, ‘Bulgarian’ or ‘Serb’ nationalities, but by transferring their religious adherence to a competing Orthodox church, they could fluctuate between the loose labels of ‘Greek’, ‘Serb’ and ‘Bulgarian’. In contrast, a Muslim was generally regarded as belonging to the Turkish race only.

Converting to Islam was seen as a process of leaving one’s own national group and ‘becoming Turkish’ (*po-Turchuwajne*). The Macedonian proverb, ‘whoever changes his faith, changes his nationality’, testifies that faith was seen to equate to nationality during the period in question and that whoever changed their faith was seen to submit to the conqueror.¹⁴⁶ Due to a powerful association perceived between the Muslim religion and the Turk, Islamicised Christians considered that they had adopted ‘the Turks’ religion’. The earliest Christians who converted to Islam were the old Macedonian feudal class in the urban centres, who, over time, became assimilated as Turks. Later the same fate befell many other Islamicised Macedonians in the large towns. But in the rural sector assimilation was far less likely to occur and the position of the peasants remained largely unaltered. Through their acceptance of Islam they acquired some of the privileges reserved for the ruling caste, however their cultural traditions and language remained unchanged.¹⁴⁷ They appear to have been nominal but ‘very lax Muslims who have adopted Islam as a protection, but hardly observe its precepts unless they are among Turks’.¹⁴⁸ Islamicised Christians appear to have identified Islam with the Ottoman Turkish Empire and the ruling feudal class, and

¹⁴⁶ The scholar of Macedonian folk literature, T. Sazdov, *Macedonian Folk Literature*, Skopje, 1987, p. 145.

¹⁴⁷ H.N. Brailsford, *op. cit.* p. 88.

¹⁴⁸ C. Eliot, *op. cit.* p. 329; See N. Limanoski, 1993, regarding Macedonian Muslims secretly maintaining their Christian faith after Islamicisation.

not as a theological belief system.¹⁴⁹ The new convert rarely took it upon himself to study the precepts of his new religion.¹⁵⁰

Although 'the Turks' religion' had become their own, generally Islamicised Macedonians were conscious that they were not Turkish. Macedonian Muslims have themselves used and been known by various labels. In the eastern regions of Macedonia, and on the Bulgarian hinterland around the Rhodope Mountains, Islamicised Christians were known by the label *Pomaks*.¹⁵¹ In the western regions of Macedonia they have commonly been known as *Poturi* or *Torbeshi*.¹⁵² In the Gora region Macedonian Muslims are known as *Goranci*.¹⁵³ Although various labels were used to denote Islamicised Christians, a popular label in the late nineteenth century was 'Turk'.¹⁵⁴ The Turks themselves labelled all Muslims as 'Turks', and Albanians

¹⁴⁹ The historian, A. Matkovski, *Otporot protiv Izlamizacija* [Resistance to Islamicisation], Skopje, 1987, p. 37.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁵¹ G.M. Mackenzie and I.P. Irby, op. cit. p. 24. The term, *Pomaks*, was in widespread use during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Bulgarian writers and was adopted by European commentators at the time when referring to all Islamicised Christians in Macedonia.

¹⁵² The historian, J. Hadzhivasilevich, *Grad Debar y vreme oslobodzhenja 1912 g.* [Debar during the liberation of 1912], Belgrade, 1940, pp. 39-40. The term *Torbeshi* is seen as politically incorrect in the late twentieth century as Islamicised Macedonians feel it has a derogatory connotation.

¹⁵³ The Gora region encompasses approximately 400 square kilometres and extends over three states. Situated where the political borders of Kosovo (Serbia), Albania and Macedonia meet. World Macedonian Congress, *Report za položbata i pravata na Gorancite vo Oblasta Gora i na Kosovo so predlozi za nivno konsolidirajne i sanirajne* [A report on the conditions of the *Gorancite* in the Gora region of Kosovo with recommendations for their consolidation and sanitation], Skopje, 2000, pp. 1-2. The contemporary commentator and historian, S. Gopchevich, also refers to this group as *Goranci*. He claims that their language is a mixture of Serbian and Albanian and that they have 'forgotten' their Serbian language. S. Gopchevitch, *Stara Srbija i Makedonija* [Old Serbia and Macedonia], Vol I, Belgrade, 1890, p. 204.

It is interesting to note that at the end of the Second World War, in 1946, a group of Islamicised Macedonians from the Gora region (the modern municipality of Dragash) presented a petition to the Macedonian government requesting that their children be educated in the Macedonian language. They met with the then President of the Macedonian Parliament, Vidoe Smilevski-Bato, however, their aim was never realised. At the same time there were calls for a modification of the administrative boundary between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Serbia (both then in the Yugoslav Federation) in order to include the Gora region into Macedonian boundaries. *Makedonsko Sonce* [weekly Macedonian news- magazine], No 263 - 09 July 1999, Article by S. Sharoski, pp. 22-23. According to the ethnographer, V. Kanchov, Macedonian Muslims in the Kitchevo region have been known as *Chitaci*. V. Kanchov, *Makedonia Etnografija i Statistika* [Macedonia Ethnography and Statistics], Sofia 1970 (1900), p. 333. The late nineteenth century compiler of ethnographic and linguistic data in the Debar region, S.T. Chaparoski, noted that Albanian Muslims in certain Debar districts (Grika, Luzunija, Dolni Debar and others) were known by the name *Malesorci*. S.T. Chaparoski, *Mesnost(ite) od Debarsko okruzhie* [Places in the Debar region], Document Number NR54, From the Archive of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences, p. 26.

¹⁵⁴ V. Kanchov, 1970 (1900), op. cit. p. 334

similarly labelled all who professed the Muslim religion as 'Turks', regardless of their ethnicity.¹⁵⁵

Although the term 'Turk' had widespread usage, Macedonian Muslims were generally conscious of their separate language, customs and traditions in comparison to Turks. In the Dolna Reka district villages, Macedonians had limited contact with Turks, and even though they adopted the religion of the Turk, and identified with the Turk on a religious basis, Turks were considered a separate people.¹⁵⁶ Born in 1911 in the village of Velebrdo, Asan Asani recalled that older people in the village referred to themselves as 'Muslims-Turks' (*Muslimani - Turci*), with an emphasis on the term 'Muslim'.¹⁵⁷ It is evident that Macedonian Muslims experienced some difficulty separating the terms 'Muslim' and 'Turk'. A lifelong resident of Velebrdo, Asani Rejep, explained:

The old people understood themselves to be Turks because we were Muslims, that's how it was perceived. In the Turkish period when a Macedonian Muslim met a Turk, he could not speak his language, he knew he wasn't the same as him. The Macedonian used different labels to identify himself back then, but he always knew he was unique.¹⁵⁸

A retired village schoolteacher, Abdula Odzheski, from Zhirovnica, stated that many of the older people referred to other Islamicised Macedonians with the term '*nashinski Turchin*' ('one of our own Turks') whereas the term '*Turchin*' ('Turk') was used when speaking of a genuine Turk.¹⁵⁹ Elderly men in the village were known to say '*Elamdulab*' ('Praise to God') at the end of a meal, indicating that the meal was finished. This Turkish term was also used as an expression forsaking Turkish identity

¹⁵⁵ S. Gopcevic, 1890, op. cit. p.113.

¹⁵⁶ Asan Asani (born 1911 Velebrdo, Dolna Reka district) interview conducted in Velebrdo on 25 March 2000. Asan Asani is from the 'Asanagovci' family (Asan's father's grandfather was named Asan) and he was able to trace his male ancestors back four generations to his grandfathers grandfather, Kara Mustafa.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. The Albanian interviewee, Justref Metovski, (born 1908 in Resen, Prespa region) advised that in the past (into the second half of the twentieth century) it was not uncommon for elderly Gypsy Muslims to identify as *Musliman-Turchin* ('Muslim-Turk') or *Turchin-Guptin* ('Turkish-Gypsy'). Albanians similarly used terms of identification such as *Musliman-Turchin* ('Muslim-Turk') or *Turchin-Arnaut* ('Turk-Albanian').

¹⁵⁸ Asani Rejep (born 1915 Velebrdo, Dolna Reka district) interview conducted on 25 March 2000 in Velebrdo.

¹⁵⁹ Interview conducted with Abdula Odzheski (born 1945 Zhirovnica) on 25 March 2000 in Zhirovnica.

- '*Turchin Elamdulah*' - '*vo posledno sum Turchin*'.¹⁶⁰ In the Gora region Macedonian Muslims identified themselves as 'Goranci'. Although conscious that they were not Turks, the interviewee, Ismail Bojda, now a resident of Skopje, advised that Macedonians of the Muslim religion considered their religion to be Turkish. Elderly folk in Gora were known to say '*imame Turska vera*' ('we have the Turkish religion') and '*z'himi Turska vera*' ('I swear by my Turkish religion').¹⁶¹

Although the Empire was made up of diverse ethnic and racial groups of people, religion remained the essential basis of identification. As such, regardless of ethnicity, Christians commonly regarded Muslims as 'Turks', so the term 'Turk' was used as a blanket label for all Muslims. In line with this view, in the late nineteenth century Macedonian Christians generally maintained a stereotypical view of all Muslims as 'Turks' in everyday language, particularly where there was limited contact with Muslim communities, including Macedonian Muslims. However, where Macedonian Christians lived in shared communities, in neighbouring villages or even maintained family links, similarities of language, customs and traditions were recognised. Exposed to Macedonian Muslim communities in the Mala Reka district, at the end of the nineteenth century, Shtiljan Trajanov Chaparoski from the village of Galitchnik recognised distinguishing cultural and ethnic features of Macedonian Muslims (as well as with other separate Muslim groups). Although maintaining use of the 'Turk' label in a loose form, Chaparoski classified Muslims into three distinct language groups, 'Turks who speak Turkish', 'Turks who speak Albanian', and 'Turks who speak Slavic' (Macedonian).¹⁶²

During the Macedonian Kresna Uprising in 1878 the political and military program of the rebel committee as outlined in its Constitution – 'Rules of the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ismail Bojda (born 1953 Brod - Gora region) interview conducted on 7 March 2000 in Skopje.

¹⁶² S.T. Chaparoski, document NR54, op. cit. J. Hadzhivasilevich claims that Christians in the Debar region commonly used the terms *Torbeshi* or the more popular *Poturi* when speaking of Islamicised Christians, and the term Turk was more likely to be used in anger. 1940, op. cit. pp. 39–40.

Macedonian Rebel Committee' - made a direct reference to Macedonian Muslims as constituting a part of the Macedonian people. According to Article 15, 'The Military Rules of the Macedonian Army': 'Any Christian or Muslim Macedonian, Turk, Albanian, Wallachian or anyone else who proves to be an opponent of the uprising and of the rebels, will be pursued and when caught, duly punished' [sic].¹⁶³ The explicit common ethnic identification in the term 'Christian or Muslim Macedonian' is noteworthy. Macedonian Muslims also appear in 'The Constitution on the Future State Organisation of Macedonia 1880' (Macedonian League) under the sub-section 'Boundaries and People', in general population data. Macedonian Muslims appear under the name '*Pomaks* (Muslims)' (Article Three), and significantly not as 'Turks'.¹⁶⁴ These movements were clearly attempting to transcend religious difference in the articulation of a nascent 'ethnic' nationalism.

Rivalry between the Bulgarian and Serb churches in the Reka districts during Ottoman rule did not impact on perceptions held by Macedonian Muslims of their Macedonian Christian neighbours. The concept of a Macedonian Patriarchist being a 'Serb' or 'Greek', or a Macedonian Exarchist as a 'Bulgarian', was one with which respondents were unfamiliar. During the period of late Ottoman rule Macedonian Muslims in the Reka districts viewed Macedonian Christians as 'Christians' and did not associate any modified form of ethnic identity with their Macedonian neighbours as a result of village Patriarchist (Serb) or Exarchist (Bulgarian) religious jurisdiction.¹⁶⁵

Of fundamental importance to the overall aims of this present work are Macedonian Muslim perceptions of Macedonian Christian identity during Ottoman rule. In every instance respondents from the Mala Reka district spoke of the 'old

¹⁶³ H. Andonov-Poljanski, editor, *Documents on the Struggle of the Macedonian People for Independence and a Nation-State*, Skopje, 1985, p. 269.

¹⁶⁴ S. Dimevski, V. Popovski, S. Shkarich, and M. Apostolski, *Makedonskata Liga i Ustavot za Drzhavno Ureduvajne na Makedonija od 1880* [The Macedonian League and Constitution for the future state organisation of Macedonia 1880], Skopje, 1985, p. 238.

¹⁶⁵ In the Reka district the Christian religious contest was played out between the Serb and Bulgarian churches.

people' routinely describing Macedonian Christians simply as being *Risyani* ('Christians'), or, as Asan Asani stated, 'the old folk knew that Macedonian Christians were different because of their religion, otherwise they were ours (*nashi*) also'.¹⁶⁶

The Islamicisation of Macedonian territory produced a splintering of what had been a relatively homogenous Christian population. More fundamentally, however, it radically challenged the easy assumption that ethnic identification and religious adherence were interchangeable. It will be demonstrated in the following chapter that the demographics were much more varied and complex than this. We turn now to examine in detail the various categories of populations occupying the Macedonian territory in the late nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁶ Asan Asani interview, op. cit.