

IN SEARCH OF COMMUNITIES IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY OTTOMAN SOURCES : THE CASE OF THE KARA FERYE DISTRICT*

Historical research on communities has been pursued along two major lines. One approach, originating from the study of mediaeval and early modern European towns, focuses on communal corporations and examines the institutional framework governing the management of communal affairs. The other approach has been influenced by sociology and anthropology, and deals with the forms of social interaction in villages and towns. In Ottoman studies, research on communities has been primarily integrated into the more general discourse on the *millet* system and on minorities during the late Ottoman period, and has been pursued almost entirely in relation to the *zimmi* population¹. Communities prior to the nineteenth century have only seldom been an issue for Ottomanists, especially in their aspect as corporative formations. Relevant information can be found scattered in several studies², but a frame of refer-

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¹ Compare especially the contributions in Benjamin BRAUDE, Bernard LEWIS, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols (New York, 1982).

² See for instance: R.C. JENNINGS, "Zimmis (non-Muslims) in early seventeenth-century Ottoman judicial records: The sharia court of Anatolian Kayseri," *Journal of the*

Eleni Gara est doctorante à l'Université de Vienne, Autriche. Eleutherias 14, GR-15342 Agia Paraskevi, Grèce

ence has not yet been developed that would allow us to evaluate the archive material located to date, and permit general conclusions. Yet urban and rural communal corporations³ constituted an integral part of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ottoman administration and social structure. It is impossible to understand the “age of the *ayan*” without studying the communal organization among Ottoman subjects. In order to gain a historical perspective, we should begin by analyzing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources.

THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Communities are not the only issue that has been overlooked by a historiography which, until recently, closely followed the perspective of the central state. However, the neglect of communal organization is also due to the rare appearance of relevant information in Ottoman sources. Based on the premises of Islamic law, in which the concept of corporation does not exist⁴, the Ottoman legal system did not formally recognize communal corporations. Yet this does not mean that Ottoman administrators ignored the phenomenon. To the contrary, recent research based on judicial records has shown that the Ottoman court not only tolerated communal corporations, but was very well able to reconcile this reality

Economic and Social History of the Orient, 21 (1978): 225-293; Gilles VEINSTEIN, “Une communauté ottomane: les Juifs d’Avlonya (Valona) dans la deuxième moitié du XVI^e siècle,” in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia, secoli XIV-XVIII* (Milano, 1987): 781-828; Suraiya FAROQHI, “Political activity among Ottoman taxpayers and the problem of sultanic legitimation (1570-1650),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 35 (1992): 1-39; Amy SINGER, *Palestinian peasants and Ottoman officials: Rural administration around sixteenth-century Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1994); Karen BARKEY, *Bandits and bureaucrats: The Ottoman route to state centralization* (Ithaca, 1994); Dror ZE’EVI, *An Ottoman century: The district of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (Ithaca, 1996). About Bulgarian historiography based on Ottoman sources, see below, note 7. In her book, Barkey discusses the social organization of the Anatolian peasantry, but only with respect to the question why seventeenth-century peasants did not rebel. Therefore she emphasizes the non-existence of communal institutions that would have made large-scale cooperation between villages possible, while dismissing the existing rural communal organization as underdeveloped. See K. BARKEY, *op. cit.*: 107-140.

³ In the present article, the term “communal corporation” has been used in order to denote a community organized on the basis of an institutional framework, irrespective of its being legally recognized as a corporation.

⁴ Joseph SCHACHT, *An introduction to Islamic law*, (Oxford, 1964): p. 155.

with Islamic law⁵. It even seems that there gradually developed a terminology relating to communal corporations, since the word *varoş* was used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents from Balkan towns as a term denoting the Christian urban community⁶. Judicial records are undoubtedly the most important Ottoman source as regards communities; Bulgarian historians have made wide use of them and have been quite successful in locating information about the communal organization of the population in the Bulgarian lands⁷. From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, there also exist non-Ottoman sources, mainly Greek ones, documenting the functioning of urban — and in some cases of rural — communal corporations in the Balkan provinces⁸. Based on this material there has developed an extensive

⁵ Svetlana IVANOVA, “Institutăt na kolektivnata otgovornost v bălgarskite gradove prez XV-XVIII v.” (*The institution of collective liability in the Bulgarian towns, fifteenth-eighteenth centuries*), *Istoričeski Pregled*, 46, 1 (1990): 33-44; Amnon COHEN, “Communal legal entities in a Muslim setting: Theory and practice: The Jewish community in sixteenth-century Jerusalem,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 3, 1 (1996): 75-90.

⁶ On the use of this term in the Bulgarian lands, see Svetlana IVANOVA, *Osmanskata mahala (The Ottoman mahalle)*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Sofia, 1989). On its use in the Kara Ferye district, compare protocol no. 28 in the judicial record of 1746 edited by Vehbi GÜNAY, *H. 1159 (M. 1746) tarihli Karaferye kazası şer’iye sicili (transkripsiyon ve değerlendirme)*, unpublished Masters thesis (Izmir, 1993): p. 138. I am indebted to both Mrs Ivanova and Mr Günay for allowing me to consult their unpublished studies. As far as we know, in judicial records prior to the late seventeenth century no word was used as a term specifically denoting a locally based community. The word *taife*, which was sometimes linked to communal formations, did not specifically refer to the urban community, but was also used in order to denote other groups, professional or religious.

⁷ See especially: Elena GROZDANOVA, “Das Kadiamt und die Selbstverwaltung der bulgarischen Gemeinden im 15. bis 18. Jahrhundert,” *Études Historiques*, 7 (1975): 147-159; *id.*, *Bălgarskata selska obština prez XV-XVIII vek (The Bulgarian rural community in the fifteenth-seventeenth centuries)* (Sofia, 1979); S. IVANOVA, *art. cit.*; E. GROZDANOVA, S. IVANOVA, “Einige Parallelen zwischen den Dorfgemeinden und den Stadtviertelgemeinden in den bulgarischen Landen (16.-17. Jh.),” *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 20, 4 (1992): 32-61 (with a review of the older bibliography).

⁸ These sources are mainly community and church archives. A small part of them has been edited and used in various studies of communal institutions. On sources for the Greek lands, see especially: Nikolaos PANTAZOPOULOS, “Community laws and customs of Western Macedonia under Ottoman rule,” *Balkan Studies*, 2 (1961): 1-22; D. A. ZAKYTHINOS, *The making of modern Greece: From Byzantium to independence* (Oxford, 1976); Giōrgos KONTOGIÖRGĒS, *Koinōnikē dynamikē kai politikē autodioikēsē: Hoi hellēnikes koinotētes tēs tourkokratias (Social dynamics and political self-administration: The Greek communities during Ottoman rule)* (Athens, 1982); Kōstas Kōstēs, “Koinotētes, ekklēsia kai millet stis «hellēnikes» perioches tēs Othōmanikēs Autokratorias kata tēn periodo tōn metarythmiseōn” (Communities, church, and millet in the “Greek” lands of the Ottoman Empire during the period of the [Tanzimat] reforms), *Mnēmōn*, 13 (1991): 57-75. On sources for the Bulgarian lands, see Hristo HRISTOV, *Băl-*

Greek historiography⁹ almost entirely unknown to Ottomanists, which offers valuable scope for comparison and may help us create a framework for the interpretation of the Ottoman documentation as well.

Contemporary Greek historians tend to apply the term “community” only to formally organized communal corporations. This more rigorous approach to the issue, which originated from a criticism of the looser use of the term in the older Greek historiography, is feasible because there exists a broadly based documentation from some Greek areas, mainly the Aegean islands¹⁰. Research has revealed that the special administrative status the latter enjoyed under Ottoman rule permitted the gradual development of powerful communal corporations¹¹. Since the early seven-

garskite obštini prez vāzraž daneto (Bulgarian communities during the Bulgarian renaissance) (Sofia, 1973); Nadja DANOVA, “Kām istorijata na Tārnovskata gradska obština prez vāzraž daneto” (On the history of the urban community of Tırnovo during the Bulgarian renaissance), *Istoričeski Pregled*, 36, 1 (1980): 106-124.

⁹ In Greece, research on communities dates back to the nineteenth century. Until approximately the 1980’s it was mainly pursued within the framework of a nationalistic historiography which saw in the development of communal institutions a manifestation of the “Greek spirit” (compare D.A. ZAKYTHINOS, *op. cit.*: p. 68). Contemporary Greek historians reject this view and emphasize the community’s social and economic aspects. See especially: Philippos ĒLIOU, *Koinōnikoi agōnes kai Diaphōtismos: Hē periptōsē tēs Smyrnēs, 1819 (Social struggle and Enlightenment: The case of Smyrna, 1819)* (Athens, 1981); G. KONTOGIORGĒS, *op. cit.* (with a review of the older bibliography); Spyros ASDRACHAS, “Phorologikes kai perioristikies leitourgies tōn koinotētōn stēn tourkokratia” (Taxation functions and restrictive functions of communities during Ottoman rule), *Ta Historika*, 3, 5 (1986): 45-62; Eutychia LIATA, *Hē Seriphos kata tēn tourkokratia, 170s-190s ai.: Symbolē stē meletē tōn koinōnikōn kai oikonomikōn domōn kai tou koinotikou systēmatos* (Seriphos under Ottoman rule, seventeenth-nineteenth centuries: A contribution to the study of the social and economic structures and of the communal system) (Athens, 1987); K. KŌSTĒS, *art. cit.*; Sōkratēs PETMEZAS, “Diacheirēsē tōn koinotikōn oikonomikōn kai koinōnikē kyriarchia: Hē stratēgikē tōn prouchontōn: Zagora 1784-1822” (Management of the community’s finances and social domination: The notables’ strategy: Zagora 1784-1822), *Mnēmōn*, 13, (1991): 77-102. Greek and Bulgarian sources have been also used in numerous studies on urban communities in the Bulgarian lands. See especially: H. HRISTOV, *op. cit.*; *id.*, “Za samoupravlenieto na bālgarite v osmanskata dāržava prez XV-XVIII v.” (On the self-administration of the Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire, fifteenth-eighteenth centuries), *Istoričeski Pregled*, 29, 1 (1973): 18-42; N. DANOVA, *art. cit.*

¹⁰ A part of the Aegean community archives still survives in place and constitutes an invaluable source for history and historical anthropology. The existence of communal legal entities in areas under Venetian rule, especially in the Ionian islands, the organization of which followed the model of Venice, has also encouraged a differentiated approach towards communities among Greek historians. On the Ionian islands, see especially Nicolas KARAPIDAKIS, *Civis fidelis: L’avènement et l’affirmation de la citoyenneté corfiote (XVI^e-XVII^e siècles)* (Frankfurt a. M., 1992).

¹¹ See especially: Helenē KOUKKOU, *Hoi koinotikoi thesmoi stis Kyklades kata tēn tourkokratia (Communal institutions in the Cyclades during Ottoman rule)*, (Athens, 1980);

teenth century, there evolved an institutional framework regulating collective representation and internal administration. The community as a corporative formation had administrative and judicial competences, as well as an important role in taxation. It was responsible for the internal distribution and collection of taxes and was itself entitled to impose taxes on the population in order to cover collective expenses or pay debts. During the eighteenth century, the leadership of the community gradually gained in authority and influence. By the early nineteenth century, the development of control mechanisms over men and land had enabled the gathering of power in the hands of a minority that rotated in the offices of the community. Communal organization in the Aegean islands owed its particular form to various factors and was undoubtedly induced by the weak presence of the Ottoman administration in that area. Nevertheless, contemporary scholars agree that it was the community's taxation functions, especially its collective liability for the payment of taxes, that played the decisive role in the further development of the institution. The available documentation on communities from other parts of the Balkans demonstrates indeed a close link between the extension of the tax-farming system, collective liability for the payment of taxes, and the emergence of communal institutions¹². Therefore, the results of the research relating to the Aegean islands may prove very useful as a frame of reference and a model for comparison in our search for seventeenth-century communities in the Balkan provinces of the Empire.

In the present project we depend on Ottoman sources, which differently from the community archives consist of documents issued by the central or district authorities. The principal question is how to proceed methodologically, so as not to overlook evidence on the one hand, and on the other to avoid reading the sources with pre-formed opinions. In view of the difficulties deriving from the attitude of the Ottoman legal system towards communal corporations, we should be open-minded when looking at the sources, and not limit ourselves to the search for detailed evidence of a corporative communal organization. An approach from the

B. J. SLOT, *Archipelagus turbatus: Les Cyclades entre colonisation latine et occupation ottomane c. 1500-1718*, 2 vols (Istanbul, 1982) I: 102-107; Spyros ASDRACHAS, "Nē-siōtikes koinotētes: Hoi phorologikes leitourgies" (The communities of the islands: taxation functions), *Ta Historika*, 5, Part I : 8 (1988): p. 3-36, Part II : 9 (1988): 229-258.

¹² Compare : G. KONTOGIÖRGĒS, *op. cit.*; S. ASDRACHAS, "Phorologikes....," *art. cit.*; S. IVANOVA, *art. cit.*

viewpoint of historical anthropology¹³ may also prove very useful, especially if we try to understand how Ottoman populations organized their communal lives and how communities responded to external pressures or threats. We should therefore not overlook or underestimate informal collective activity and communal cooperation. Research on communities in the Ottoman Empire has been for the most part limited to the domains of taxation and provincial administration. Communities, however, constitute social organizations and develop their own structures, hierarchies, and power relations. Now that we try to perceive the reality experienced by the Ottoman subjects, reexamining traditional descriptions and interpretations made from the perspective of the central administration, we should not only study the relations between communities and the state, but also the forms of interaction within communities.

As regards their corporative aspect, the major challenge is the correct evaluation of the changes taking place in the course of time. It would be a mistake to expect that communal institutions developed in a linear way from a rudimentary to an elaborated form. It would be equally erroneous to assume that they did not evolve over time, but had always been the same as they were when they attracted the attention of outside observers in the nineteenth century. We are, however, justified in expecting that the changes in the Ottoman taxation system during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries marked a turning point in the development of communal institutions. By causing as it did a radical increase of taxes collected in cash¹⁴, this transformation gave a new dimension to the old practice of holding the community collectively liable for tax debts. Especially larger communities must have been forced to quickly respond to the new situation, by creating the necessary institutions or further developing already existing ones. This would also explain the prominent role of taxation in the later communal organization, as well as the rapid increase of sources and information about communal corporations from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards¹⁵.

¹³ Compare Alan MACFARLANE, "History, anthropology and the study of communities," *Social History*, 2 (1977): 631-652.

¹⁴ Compare Avdo SUČESKA, "Die Entwicklung der Besteuerung durch die 'Avariz-i divâniye and die Tekâlif-i 'örffîye im Osmanischen Reich während des 17. und 18. Jhs.," *Südost-Forschungen*, 27 (1968): 89-130; Halil İNALCIK, "Military and fiscal transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 6 (1980): 283-337.

¹⁵ Certain Bulgarian historians, especially Grozdanova and Hristov, propound a different view, claiming that the communal institutions of the Christian population, especially in rural communities, date back to the Middle Ages. As a result of this assumption,

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 _____ THE FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1. The sources

After this short discussion of the methodological framework, we shall turn to the primary sources and attempt a case study of the *kaza* of Kara Ferye (Beroia) in Rumeli. We will attempt to piece together information about collective activities of the population and communal corporations in the district. The sources used for this purpose are nineteen volumes of judicial records from the Kara Ferye *şeriat* court dating from the first half of the seventeenth century¹⁶. I have located relevant information by searching for evidence of any kind of collective activity relating to villages, neighborhoods, religious communities etc. Practically speaking, all protocols in which there appear formulas of the type “the persons X, Y and the other inhabitants of the village of Z” or “the whole town population” were retained. My research yielded about 650 documents concerning loans raised by village communities and over 200 documents relating to a variety of matters. The collectivities that appear in this material are territorial, such as “village” (*qarye*), “town neighborhood” (*maḥalle*), “town” (*qaşaba, medīne, şehir*), and “district” (*qaza*), in addition to groups based on a common religion, such as “Muslims” (*müslimān*), “Christians” (*zimmiler, kefere*), and “Jews” (*yehūdīyān*). As social groups, one might mention the “notables” (*a’yān ve eşrāf*) and the “taxpaying population” (*re’āyā*). These three kinds of collectivities appear in the documents independently or in combinations,

these Bulgarian historians tend to treat the period from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century as homogeneous, and mix up information from different periods. A younger generation of historians, however, holds the view that a closer scrutiny of the relevant documentation will be able to show that during these four centuries communities in the Bulgarian lands underwent an evolution in a way very similar to those in Greece.

¹⁶ Kara Ferye is the Ottoman name of the Greek town Beroia (pronounced Veria), which is situated about 60 km SW of Salonica. In the Local Historical Archive of the town (Topiko Historiko Archeio Beroias) there exists a collection of 129 *kadi sicilii* volumes from the period 1602-1882. Three among the nineteen volumes belonging to the first half of the seventeenth century are not proper *kadi sicilii*, but record the loans granted by three major cash *vakıfs* of the town. These nineteen volumes are only a part of the original court archive, which unfortunately did not survive intact. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the *kaza* of Kara Ferye comprised over 170 villages, the population of which was almost entirely Christian. Significant Muslim population lived only in the town of Kara Ferye. Apart from Muslims and Christians, Jews and Gipsies also were present in the town.

such as “the Muslims of the town”, “the notables and the taxpaying population of the district”, “the taxpaying population of the district”, etc.

Irrespective of being organized on a corporative basis or not, the village, as well as the town neighborhoods, are elementary communal entities in all human societies. Therefore it is not surprising to find them on protocols in the Kara Ferye judicial records acting as plaintiffs of defendants, as petitioners, or as parties to various contracts. The appearance of other collectivities, however, such as the town or the district, presupposes the existence of representation structures making possible an effective cooperation of people on a large scale. As concerns the question whether there existed a representation system on an institutional basis including the whole town or even the whole district population or not, an indication could be how frequently such collective activities appear in the judicial records. If they appear only sporadically, one could assume that these instances concern merely spontaneous actions due to extraordinary circumstances. On the contrary, frequent collective activities of the town and especially of the district population imply the institutionalization of collective representation and a cooperation on a regular basis.

A survey of the Kara Ferye judicial records has shown that the collectivities known as “the village”, “the Christians of the town”, and “the Christian town neighborhood” appear much more frequently than others¹⁷. In the protocols from the mid-seventeenth century, when the first *tevzi defteris* were recorded, we also encounter a significant presence of the collectivity known as “notables”: for the period 1645 to 1652 there exist fourteen such instances, as opposed to only three relating to “notables” in the first forty-five years of the century. As to the other collectivities, namely those denoted as “town”, “Muslim town neighborhood”, “Muslims of the town”, “Jews”, “district”, “taxpaying population of the district”, and “Christians of the district”, they appear only seldom¹⁸. The rare occurrence of Jews on the court registers is most probably due to their small number and not to their lack of communal institutions¹⁹. As concerns the Muslim community of the town,

¹⁷ 43%, 19%, and 16% of the recorded cases respectively, without taking into consideration the loans contracted by villages.

¹⁸ 7, 9, 2, 5, 2, 2, and 1 case respectively.

¹⁹ It would be very surprising if the small Jewish community of Kara Ferye were not corporatively organized, for its members were bound to each other by extrareligious ties

however, which was at least as numerous as the Christian one, the reason for its lack of prominence seems to be the light taxation of the Muslim urban population²⁰. Indeed, a scrutiny of the documents has revealed that the greater part of the Christians' collective activity related to taxation matters (54% of all cases concerning the collectivity known as "Christians of the town", 30% of those concerning the group denoted as "Christian neighborhood"); on the other hand, the Muslim population was almost completely inactive in this respect: there exists only a single relevant protocol dating from the mid-seventeenth century²¹.

2. *Representatives and dignitaries*

According to the sources, villages and town neighborhoods were collectively represented by a number of individuals, but there is no information as to how the latter were elected or appointed. Furthermore, in the protocols, the representatives are not mentioned by any title but only by their proper names. A special terminology has been used only in two instances: in a piece of litigation involving the village of Çernova (1648), there appears the title "*koca*", or village elder. In another case, dated 1650 and involving the town neighborhood of Ayo Patap, the title "*mahalle başı*", or head of the neighborhood is mentioned²². That both instances date from the mid-seventeenth century may well be no coincidence. Rather, the timing may reflect either the development from an informal to a formal communal organization, during which there appeared the need for the creation of a special terminology, or else a change in the court's attitude towards communities, involving the recognition and adoption of the existing terminology by the court. The only

as well: they worked in the same manufacture and lived together in the same quarter. On the Jewish community of Kara Ferye, see Eleni GARA, "Competition between guilds and state intervention: The conflict between manufacturers of woollens from Salonica and from Kara Ferye in the first half of the 17th century," *Proceedings of the 10th reunion of the 2nd AFEMAM-EURAMES Conference, Aix-en-Provence 4-7.7.1996* (forthcoming) (1996).

²⁰ According to a *tevzi defteri* of 1646, the Christians comprised 165 *avarız hanesis*, while the Muslims formed only 8, exactly as many as the Jews. See İKB [Hierodikastikos Kōdikas Beroias = Kara Ferye kadi sicili] 17, p. 121 (23.8.1646).

²¹ İKB 20, f. 39r, no. 4 (12.2.1652). The protocol records the unsuccessful attempt of the neighborhood of Çaşnigir to force its *hammamcı* Eslem hatun daughter of Bilal to participate in the payment of the *tekalif-i şakka*. More about the collective activity of the Muslim population on p. 156 ff.

²² İKB 19, f. 1v, no. 3 (24.9.1648) and İKB 20, f. 4v, no. 4 (27.9-6.10.1650) respectively.

titles that have been regularly recorded relate to the town, namely “the *ayan* and *eşraf*”, and “the *kethüda* of the Christians”²³.

The non-standardized way in which the representatives of the communities are referred to in the documents shows the lack of a formally organized representation system at that time. Even the *kethüda*, though a recognized dignitary of the Christian community, did not usually appear among its representatives — or was not recorded in his official function —, if the case had nothing to do with his special duties. A century later, however, when the collective representation of the *kaza* population had obviously become an institutionalized part of the local administration system, the way of recording the representatives of the communities in the protocols was completely different. In a *tevzi defteri* of 1746, the delegates of the district population are mentioned in the following order: the *ayan* of the town of Kara Ferye, the legal representative (*vekil*) of the *çiftlik* owners, the *kethüda* and representatives of the town *reaya*, the representatives of the villages of the *Menlik mukataası*, of the salt-producing villages, and of fifteen villages named *kura karyeleri*. Lastly there were the legal representatives of the remaining *reaya* population²⁴.

The terms *ayan* and *eşraf* denoted local Muslim dignitaries, usually from the *askeri* and *ulema*. Among them we regularly find several *çavuşes*, *beys*, *kadis* or *hatibs*²⁵. Already in the beginning of the seventeenth century, the *ayan* and *eşraf* appear to have had a significant influence on local administration. We find them requesting the removal of a *muhzir* from office and the expulsion of an incompetent doctor²⁶, as well as representing the town population in various affairs and taking part in the negotiations relating to the regulation of prices (*narh*)²⁷. As already mentioned, the activities of the *ayan*, and accordingly their local importance, increased from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, as they became officially involved in the internal distribution of the district's taxes.

While *ayan* and *eşraf* were not awarded salaries, the *kethüda* in seventeenth-century Kara Ferye was a salaried dignitary appointed by the

²³ In İKB 11, p. 10, no. 2 (27.4-6.5.1627) the latter is named ‘the town *kethüda*’ (şehir *kethüdası*).

²⁴ See V. GÜNAY, *op. cit.* : p. 138, no. 28.

²⁵ For instance, in İKB 9, f. 16v, no. 3 (13-22.2.1621), the *ayan* mentioned by name are two *kadis*, one *müderris*, three *çavuşes*, and one *bey*.

²⁶ İKB 6, f. 14r, no. 3 (18.1.1620) and İKB 14, p. 78, no. 3 (10-19.9.1638) respectively.

²⁷ See below, p. 156 ff.

Christians of the town for the term of a year and confirmed in office by the *kadi*²⁸. Among his other duties, he appointed a person to take charge of the maintenance of water conduits (*şu yolcu*), and was responsible for the collection of certain taxes²⁹. From the documentation it becomes evident that the *kethüda* had solely the functions of a proxy³⁰ and that he was not the leader of the community. He was entitled to act in the community's name only as long as he was explicitly authorized to do so. The power to take decisions in the name of the community rested with its representatives only, who in their turn were answerable to the community at large. The limits of the *kethüda*'s authority are very clearly demonstrated in a protocol of 1639. When some persons accused the then *kethüda* of having two debtors of the community imprisoned in the *voyvoda*'s jail on his own initiative, he cleared himself by demanding the official interrogation of the community's representatives, who then declared that he had acted in accordance with their decision³¹.

We have no information at all as to how the *kethüda* or the representatives were elected or assigned to office. The number of persons representing the Christian community of the town, as recorded in the protocols, varies from two up to twenty-six persons (in most cases it lies between seven and ten). Unfortunately, their occupations have not been consistently recorded. Among the community's representatives there were almost always some priests but never a bishop or the metropolitan of the town. Communal organization can thus be described as a body of representatives responsible for the management of community affairs and, though answerable to the members, having the power to take decisions. In addition, the community also possessed a *kethüda*, who was

²⁸ Compare the statement of the Christians in İKB 6, f. 36r, no. 4 (4-13.5.1620): "As Dimo's term of office as a *kethüda* for last year has been completed (*va'desi temâm olmağın*), we have unanimously appointed Manol as a *kethüda* for one year, with a wage of 2,000 *akçe*." A similar office existed in other Ottoman towns as well: compare the functions of the *şayh al-yuhud* in sixteenth-century Jerusalem in Amnon COHEN, *Jewish life under Islam: Jerusalem in the 16th century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984): 36-42.

²⁹ On the appointment of the *su yolcu*, compare İKB 14, p. 23, no. 6 (8.3.1638). On the collection of taxes, compare İKB 11, p. 10, no. 2 (27.4-6.5.1627) which records the court's permission for *kethüda* Manol to collect money from the Christian townsmen, in order to cover certain common expenses. For the duties of the *kethüda*, compare especially İKB 11, p. 103, no. 3 (25.10.1627): "As we (i.e. the Christians of the town) are now in need of a *kethüda* in order to manage our internal affairs (*içimüzde vâkı' olan maşâlihümüzü görüb gözetmeğe*), we have unanimously appointed Dimo Takyacı as a *kethüda*."

³⁰ In İKB 14, p. 29, no. 3 (23.3.1638) Toma Yalpa is named "the proxy (*vekîl*) and *kethüda*" of the Christians.

³¹ İKB 15, f. 7v, no. 1 (24.7.1639).

both an executive and represented the group *vis à vis* the Ottoman administration. The *kethüda* was appointed for a year and confirmed in office by the court. These arrangements show striking similarities with Ottoman guild organization and suggest a common pattern for both kinds of corporations, professional and communal³².

3. Villages and town neighborhoods

According to our documentation, the collectivities known as “the village” and “the town neighborhood” had similar competences. They were liable for criminal offences committed within their boundaries and were charged with the control of the morals and the conduct of their inhabitants³³. Therefore they were also entitled to take measures in order to prevent and fight criminality, the most common of which were the prohibition to open public houses and the expulsion of undesirable persons³⁴. They were also responsible for the prompt payment of the taxes incumbent on “their” inhabitants, that is the persons enrolled in the registers as residing in the town quarter or village in question. Thus, in the documents, villages and town neighborhoods appear to internally distribute taxes demanded as lump sums by the authorities, to exact the payment of overdue amounts from present or former inhabitants, as well as to collect and pay taxes through appointed representatives. Furthermore, they resorted to court for complaints and petitions regarding all sorts of matters³⁵, in order to protest against the abuses of *sipahis* and

³² On the guild organization, see especially Robert MANTRAN, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle: Essai d'histoire institutionnelle, économique et sociale* (Paris, 1962): p. 367-379; Abdul-Karim RAFAQ, “Craft organizations and religious communities in Ottoman Syria (XVI-XIX centuries)” in *La Shi'a nell'impero Ottomano (Roma, 15.4.1991)* (Rome, 1993): 27-32.

³³ On collective liability, see S. IVANOVA, *art. cit.* (with examples from the Bulgarian lands). Compare also İKB 14, p. 123, no. 1 (26.1-4.2.1639) which records the guarantee given to several *çiftlik* owners by the inhabitants of the village of Palatiça, to the effect that they would be responsible for any attacks against the *çiftlik* holders' properties. See also İKB 14, p. 20, no. 3 (26.2-7.3.1638) which records the statement of the neighborhood of Hacı Karagöz, to the effect that Mahmud son of Liparlı-zade Ahmed refused to enter the house while his father was absent.

³⁴ Compare İKB 1, p. 76, no. 1-3 (9.8.1603) which records the request of the neighborhood of Çaşnigir for permission to expel Ömer-oğlu Mehmed and Hasan Berber. See also İKB 4, f. 18v, no. 5 (29.3-7.4.1617) which records the guarantee given by the pub owners Papa-İspiyot and Mihal to the neighborhood of Hrisovenedik that they would personally be responsible if any quarrels should occur.

³⁵ Compare İKB 18, f. 26v, no. 3 (1.8.1648) and f. 27v, no. 4 (1-10.8.1648) which record a dispute of the village of Vestiča with Ali çelebi, concerning a buffalo-pen.

tax collectors³⁶, or to press charges against private individuals or other villages and neighborhoods³⁷. In more serious cases, they sent petitions to Istanbul³⁸. Moreover, they collectively borrowed money, bought and sold real estate, and some town neighborhoods also administered pious foundations. From this short presentation it becomes obvious that the collective activities of villages and town neighborhoods in the seventeenth-century Kara Ferye district are directly comparable to those in other areas of the Empire: similar instances have been documented in the Bulgarian lands, as well as in Anatolia³⁹. The limited space of an article makes it impossible to discuss all the issues relating to this collective activity in detail, therefore the analysis will be restricted to only those which are directly related to communal organization or indicate how the community functioned as a corporation.

In this respect, the taxation functions of villages and town neighborhoods are of primary importance. As already mentioned, the latter were liable for the payment of the taxes owed by their inhabitants; this means that they had to deliver the whole amount due, even if private individuals fled, refused to pay, or were insolvent. As a result, taxpayers defaulting on their obligations became legally debtors of the community and could be treated accordingly. Villages and town neighborhoods, therefore, appear to prosecute those who refused to pay, exacting from them the amount due or coming to a compromise⁴⁰. It even seems that towards the middle of the century, under the pressure of newly imposed taxes, urban and rural communities tried to extend their authority to persons living in the locality, but until then only marginally incorporated because of their different tax status. Thus, in 1652, the Muslim neigh-

³⁶ Compare İKB 2, f. 39r, no. 3 (8-17.8.1613) which records accusations of the village of Branyat against its *voyvoda*. See also İKB 4, f. 8v, no. 2 (28.4-7.5.1616) which records accusations of the *vakıf* villages of Prodrom, İsfiniç and Menlik against their *cabis*.

³⁷ Compare İKB 11, p. 75, no. 1 (5-14.6.1627) which records the dispute of the villages of Armira and Hrisoreki over water-rights.

³⁸ Compare İKB 18, f. 45r, no. 2 (6.10.1647) which records a petition of the inhabitants of Çitroz declaring that they are no longer able to fulfil their responsibilities with respect to the *menzil*.

³⁹ Compare especially E. GROZDANOVA, S. IVANOVA, *art. cit.* as well as various protocols edited in R.C. JENNINGS, *art. cit.*

⁴⁰ Compare İKB 20, f. 4v, no. 4 (27.9-6.10.1650) which records a dispute between the neighborhood of Ayo Patap and a certain Milaki who refused to pay the tax known as *bedel-i avarız*. See also İKB 13, f. 6r, no. 1 (17.5.1634) which records Dimo's son of Kırязı transferring a house, a vineyard and 1,000 *akçe* to the inhabitants of his native village of Vosova, so that he would not have to pay his share of the collective taxes any more.

borhood of Çaşnigir tried unsuccessfully to force its *hammamcı* Eslem hatun to participate in the payment of the *tekalif-i şakka*⁴¹. In 1651, the tax-paying population of the *kaza* of Kara Ferye managed to procure a *ferman* ordering the *vakıf* villages of the district to contribute to the tax *bedel-i nüzüil* by way of the so called “aid for the neighbor” (*qoñşu yardımı*)⁴².

In the protocols recording disputes concerning delayed taxes, the community appears as a group. There is, however, evidence that tax collection was actually entrusted to one or more persons acting as the community’s proxies. The following example not only illustrates this point, but also sheds light on two other aspects, namely the liability of the representatives for their management of the community’s taxation affairs, as well as their delicate relations with the communal body. In the year 1613, the inhabitants of the village of Triyanda took their proxy Papa-Yorgi to court and accused him of having embezzled the money he had collected in order to pay various taxes of the village, as well as the interest on a collective loan. Papa-Yorgi acknowledged that he had delivered only a part of the amount due, but asserted that he would provide evidence about the whereabouts of the remainder as well. The village was obviously not persuaded. Presumably in order to force Papa-Yorgi into a compromise, the community accused him of abuses and overtaxation in alliance with the *subaşı*s, and crowned this new indictment with a charge of adultery, thus achieving his prompt imprisonment. This step brought the desired results. A few days later Papa-Yorgi and the village inhabitants came to a compromise, and the former acknowledged in court that he still had in his possession a large part of the money initially collected⁴³. The indictment against Papa-Yorgi follows a pattern very well known from litigations against persons holding power and authority: the complaint is not limited to the enumeration of the concrete offences, but is crowned by a morally weighty charge, in this case that of abuses and adultery, with the obvious intention to morally discredit the accused⁴⁴. Another interesting feature of this document is that it

⁴¹ İKB 20, f. 39r, no. 4 (12.2.1652).

⁴² İKB 20, f. 22v, no. 1 (30.6-9.7.1651) and İKB 20, f. 22r, no. 3 (27.6.1651).

⁴³ On the litigation, see İKB 2, f. 34v, no. 5 and f. 35r, no. 1 (19-28.7.1613), on the compromise, İKB 2, f. 36r, no. 5. In this protocol the date is missing because the paper is torn, but it must have been the 27th of July as is true of other texts on the same page.

⁴⁴ Some days before the hearing of this litigation, the Christian community of the town had pressed charges against two *yasağçıs*. In the indictment, the enumeration of the concrete offences (they related to overtaxation) is followed by accusations that the

shows how easily the representatives — or should we say the leadership? — of the community could be identified by their fellow-countrymen as a part of the official power structure. When this happened, the men in question were suspected of collaborating with the Ottoman authorities, thus “betraying their own people.”

Differently from matters relevant to collection and payment, the distribution of taxes within the community was not recorded in court; therefore it surfaces only in cases of internal conflict or in complaints about unfair distribution⁴⁵. The only other kind of documentation we have is a small *tevzi defteri* relating to a Christian neighborhood and dating from the year 1710, which unfortunately does not mention the purpose for which it was drawn up. This register records a variety of sums assigned to each person listed and it may very well relate not to a tax but to other expenses⁴⁶.

Unfortunately, we lack concrete information about the procedures of internal tax distribution. Yet the few instances relating to the issue not only demonstrate that taxes were indeed apportioned among the community members, but also highlight the court’s regulating function, as an authority with executive powers to which both community and individual had recourse. Thus in the year 1627, Toma son of Yani Timotiyo from the town neighborhood of Valteştini managed to persuade the court that, since he and his brother, a minor, lived together in their paternal house, they should go on paying only for one *avarız hanesi*, as their late father had done, while the neighborhood demanded payment for two *avarız hanesis*⁴⁷. In another piece of litigation, dated 1651, Yani Öksüz-öğlü charged his neighborhood with unfairly distributing the *tekalif-i*

yasakçıs molested the inhabitants’ wives and sons. Moreover the *yasakçıs* supposedly forced their way into the townsmen’s houses and demanded food without payment. See İKB 2, f. 31r, no. 4 (11.7.1613). In seventeenth-century Manisa, dervishes were often accused by their competitors of pandering and of molesting children. See K. BARKEY, *op. cit.*: p. 131.

⁴⁵ In some Greek archives, there survives documentation relating to the internal distribution and collection of taxes by communities, but this dates from a much later period. Especially interesting — for it is an example from the Ottoman mainland — is the communal book recording the income, expenditures and debts of the small town of Zagora in the Mount Pelion area, dating from the years 1784-1822. See S. PETMEZAS, *art. cit.*

⁴⁶ İKB 2, 2nd part, f. 35r, no. 3 (15.10.1710) entitled “Hrisövenedik mahallesi ehâlisinüñ tevzi’ defterleridür ki zıkr olunur”. There are thirty-one names mentioned and the sums vary from 115 to 2,760 *akçe* (?). This *tevzi defteri* is found among several other protocols from the period *receb* to *şevval* 1122 (26.8-21.12.1710) which have been erroneously attached to the *kadi sicili* of 1022 (1613).

⁴⁷ İKB 11, p. 103, no. 4 (12-21.10.1627).

şakka and complained that he was made to pay as much as Todoş, an allegedly wealthier person. In this instance the court decided that from then on Todoş would have to pay twice as much as Yani⁴⁸. We find a similar pattern in a protocol of 1648 relating to the distribution of a collective loan. In this case, the peasant woman Istamata from the *vakıf* village of Çernova pressed charges against two of her village elders, and accused them of making her pay a share of a recent collective loan, although she had not at all profited from it, a procedure which was not permitted by the court⁴⁹. In all three cases, the court decided in favor of the private individuals concerned, thus interfering directly in the community's distributive practices. It is, however, evident that normally the community was responsible for the distribution; the court interfered only in case of complaints.

The management of the taxation affairs of villages and town neighborhoods as described above presupposes a common fund, effective communal organization, as well as a self-perception of the community as being an entity independent of its actual members. The same perception of a corporate identity is manifested in the other collective economic activities of villages and town neighborhoods. As already mentioned, the latter appear in the documents when borrowing money or buying and selling real estate. Collective loans and debts, especially as regards village communities, are very well documented in the Kara Ferye judicial records, so that we can reconstruct the procedures both of their contraction and repayment. In order jointly to raise a loan, the villagers had to take the decision, appoint representatives that would find a creditor and negotiate the terms, entrust one or more persons with the administration or the internal distribution of the money, collect and pay the interest in due time, and lastly collect and repay the principal. Research⁵⁰ has shown that it was very common for villages to discharge their debts only after many years, in many cases long after the deaths of the initial borrowers, a practice in contradiction to the Islamic law which stipulates that in case of the debtor's death, all debts should be paid off immediately⁵¹. Larger communities, for instance the town's Christians, had to

⁴⁸ IKB 20, f. 37r, no. 2 (22.12.1651).

⁴⁹ IKB 19, f. 1v, no. 3 (24.9.1648). More about this case below, on p. 154 ff.

⁵⁰ I am currently working on a Ph.D. thesis — soon to be presented at the University of Vienna — concerning credit relations in the *kaza* of Kara Ferye in the first half of the seventeenth century.

⁵¹ See J. SCHACHT, *op. cit.*: p. 169. In case the deceased had contracted an individual loan, the debt had to be paid off immediately in case the deceased had contracted an individual loan.

cope with a wider range of taxes in cash and accordingly possessed a more important fund. Such communities not only borrowed, but also lent out money⁵². Town neighborhoods may have accorded loans as well. Unfortunately the relevant protocols record debts and not loan contracts, therefore it is not clear whether the amounts of money mentioned as belonging to “the neighborhood’s funds” had been lent out or not⁵³. Some town neighborhoods administered pious foundations as well, as for instance Ayo Dimitri, which in the year 1620 was permitted to sell a ruined house belonging to its *vakıf*⁵⁴. There also existed Muslim pious foundations lending out cash at interest in order to help a given neighborhood with its extraordinary taxes. But, as no deeds of trust survive, we do not know if the administration of these funds was entrusted to the neighborhood collectively or to a certain individual. As concerns collective purchases and sales of real estate, town neighborhoods are on record buying and selling houses⁵⁵, while villages bought *çiftlik*s and meadows and sold houses and fields⁵⁶. As to the legal problems posed by the purchase and sale of collective property, the court may have formally regarded these transactions as a kind of joint property and thus reconciled these cases with Islamic law; on the level of everyday judicial practice, however, this corresponded to a recognition of the community as a corporation.

4. *The Christian community of the town*

As we have already seen, the Christian community of the town, appears not only a corporation in the eyes of its members, but was also

⁵² On the borrowing of money, compare İKB 2, f. 31r, no. 3 (11.7.1613) which records litigation between the community and the bishop Sofati [sic] (more about this case on p. 153 ff). See also İKB 14, p. 67, no. 1 (4.8.1638), which records litigation between the community and its creditor, the *voyvoda* of Kara Ferye Ömer ağa. On the lending of money, compare İKB 15, f. 7v, no. 1 (24.7.1639) which records litigation between the community and its debtors Kiryazi and Dimo, salt merchants (more about this case on p. 145). On the Christian community of the town, see below, p. 152 ff.

⁵³ Compare İKB 1, p. 83, no. 7 (8-17.9.1603): “Pavli, Toma Kostandin, Dimo, and Mihal Bogdan are guarantors to Yorgi’s debt of 5,000 *akçe* to the money (*aqçe*) of the neighborhood of Ayo Yani.”

⁵⁴ İKB 6, f. 36v, no. 5 (9.5.1620).

⁵⁵ Compare İKB 14, p. 61, no. 4 (24.6-3.7.1638) which records the purchase of the house of Fatıma daughter of Mahmud çavuş by the neighborhood of Hrisovenedik. See also İKB 6, f. 37r, no. 2 (10.5.1620) which records the sale of a house to Toloyi by the neighborhood of Ayo Dimitri.

⁵⁶ Compare İKB 15, f. 52r, no. 3 (9.4.1640) which records the purchase of the *çiftlik* of Komno Kokino by the village of Dobra. See also İKB 11, p. 32, no. 3 (26.5-4.6.1627) which records the sale of a house and a field to Niko Koçi by the village of Turkohor.

informally recognized as such by the court. The community's taxation functions corroborate this impression. A significant part of its activities related to the collection of the tax *monopolye*⁵⁷. As applied in Kara Ferye, this was a tax on the sale of imported wine and spirits ('*araq*') originating mainly from the nearby small town of Ağostos (Naousa). The Christian community was not simply responsible for the collection of *monopolye*; it used to farm the tax from the initial beneficiary or the superintendent⁵⁸, and was in its turn entitled to farm it out to private individuals for a certain period of time, with all the formalities of a regular *iltizam* contract⁵⁹. These persons were town residents and obviously prominent members of the Christian community, since their names are often found among its representatives. The tax rates, which have been recorded in some protocols, varied from year to year. There is, however, no information at all as to who decided on this matter; the formulas "according to the ancient custom of our town" and "our *monopolye*" found in a relevant protocol of 1648 suggest that it was the Christian community itself⁶⁰. Unfortunately the documentation is incomplete and does not allow a full reconstruction of the procedures relating to the farming out and collection of this tax.

⁵⁷ In the documents, this tax is also referred to as *monopolyo* or *monapolye*.

⁵⁸ Compare İKB 11, p. 134, no. 2 (8-17.1.1628): Statement of Hüseyin beg, superintendent (*emîn*) of the wine-tax *monopolyo* (*resm-i fuçi monopolyosı*) of the town of Kara Ferye from March 1, 1036 until the end of March 1037, in the presence of the Christians (*zimmîler*) of the town (represented by seven persons): "In my authority as *emîn*, I had already received 10,000 *akçe* from the aforementioned Christians. This [constituted part of the] proceeds from the tax *monopolyo*, amounting to 20,000 *akçe*, which had been in their possession by means of *iltizam* (*ber veğh-i iltizâm mutaşarrıf olduqları*). They owed 10,000 *akçe*, which sum, in my authority as *emîn*, I now have received in its entirety. As concerns the sum of 20,000 *akçe*, I have no more claims on the aforementioned Christians."

⁵⁹ Typical is the protocol İKB 15, f. 84v, no. 2 (15.6.1640): Statement of the Christians in the presence of Angelaki Papas, Todoş Hasamarlı (?) and Kosta Papa-Ispiyot: "We have entrusted (*der-'uhde eyledük*) the aforementioned Christians with the *monopolye* of the wine coming to Kara Ferye from the village of Ağostos for 3.5 months beginning Rebiülevvel 1,1050 against payment of 20,000 *akçe*, on the condition that they tax (*resim almaq*) every *hıml* of wine 16 *akçe* and every *medre* of *arak* 4 *akçe*, and they have accepted to act accordingly (*munvâl-i muharrer üzre iltizâm ve qabül eylediler*)."

⁶⁰ İKB 18, f. 21r, no. 1 (9.4.1648): Statement of the Christians in the presence of Takyacı Manol and Alilo (?): "According to the ancient custom of our town, we have entrusted [the aforementioned Christians] with our *monopolye* from the date of this deed until the completion of 165 days, for the amount of 6,000 *akçe*, on the condition that they tax according to the custom (*resm-i mu'tâd alınmaq üzre*) counting one hundred barrels as eighty (*yüz 'aded fuçisi seksen şayılıb*), and they have accepted to act accordingly."

As to the organization of the Christian community and internal struggles for power, there exist three documents of 1613 which can shed some light on the issue. In July 1613, the Christians of the town, represented by a delegation of five persons among whom a certain Yalpa son of Manol, took to court bishop Sofati [sic] and the prominent community member Simo son of Marcel⁶¹. The charge was that the bishop, having borrowed money from Simo in order to send a petition to Istanbul, exacted from the community the payment of both loan and travel expenses. The plaintiffs, however, refused to pay on the grounds that this constituted a private dispute, and not everybody had been informed about the resolution to send the petition. As the bishop confirmed that only some persons were privy to the decision, the court announced that only these few had to pay.

Obviously, a part of the community's leadership was involved in the affair: the nameless persons privy to the decision, as the bishop's intimates, must have been prominent Christians of the town. Furthermore, the bishop stated that it was decided to send the petition after a consultation with some priests; in addition to that, the credit was granted by Simo son of Marcel, a person who had been a representative of the community and had formerly acted as a tax collector⁶². The petition concerned a dispute of the bishop and some other persons with the former *voyvoda* of the town, and was obviously not regarded as a private matter by these prominent Christians. Nevertheless, a great part of the community seem not to have shared this view. It certainly was not easy for the opponents to prevail over the bishop and his party. The sole fact that the dispute was taken to court shows that it had been impossible to settle within the community⁶³. It can also be no coincidence that, con-

⁶¹ ΙΚΒ 2, f. 31r, no. 3 (11.7.1613). "Bishop (*pisqopōs*) Sofati" of the Ottoman text must be identical with Ιῶσάφης Β, metropolitane of Beroia from 1610 to 1613. See Thanasēs ΠΑΡΑΖΩΤΟΣ, *He Beroia kai hoi naoi tēs, 11os-18os ai.: Historikē kai archaiologikē spoudē tōn mnēmeiōn tēs polēs (Veria and its churches, eleventh-eighteenth centuries: A historical and archaeological study of the town's monuments)* (Athens, 1994): p. 66. For the sake of convenience I will continue calling Ιῶσάφης/Sofati a bishop.

⁶² Simo, as well as Yalpa, his adversary, had been among the representatives of the Christian population only a month before. See ΙΚΒ 2, f. 21r, no. 5 (11.6.1613). Simo had been also one of the three persons charged with the collection of *monopolye* in the year 1602. See ΙΚΒ 1, p. 1, no. 5 (27.10-5.11.1602).

⁶³ It is by now an established fact that non-Muslims regularly resorted to the Ottoman court, at least until the late seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the rare appearance of cases in the judicial records implying an internal community conflict suggests that such disputes were normally settled within the community, the more so as in Ottoman society,

trary to the usual practice, there appears not even a single priest among the Christian delegation in court. That this litigation was the last act in an internal conflict is evident from two further protocols recorded only a day earlier: in the first, the Christians of the town testified to the noble character of Yalpa son of Manol and to his wise management of the affairs of the common people⁶⁴, while in the second, they denounced the bishop's ally Simo as a malicious and treacherous person, and a usurer to boot⁶⁵. In order to urge upon the court the value of Yalpa's conduct, the townspeople did not even hesitate to declare that, if it had not been for him, they would have fled the town long ago.

We find a similar pattern some thirty years later, in a protocol of 1648 which we have already encountered, relating to the *vakıf* village of Çernova⁶⁶. The peasant woman Istamata pressed charges against Papa-Dimo and Anastaş, two of her village elders, and accused them of having plunged the village into enormous debts by raising collective loans at their own discretion. She claimed that the two men had embezzled part of the borrowed money and, in general, had poorly managed the community's affairs. She added that, if the situation did not improve, it was certain that the villagers would soon disperse. As a concrete example of the accused's conduct she stated that they had made her share in the repayment of a recent collective loan, although she had not profited from this loan at all. After establishing the truth of the accusations and the discontent of the community, the court ordered that Istamata did not have to pay, and that from then on Papa-Dimo and Anastaş should refrain from meddling in the village's affairs.

This case shares two important features with the one we have already discussed: the two village elders, exactly like the bishop's party in the first case, regarded themselves as authorized to take decisions on communal matters, without ensuring first the consent of all community members. On the other hand, the court did not confine itself to pro-

the settling of a dispute out of court was generally considered preferable. On the court's part as an arbiter in intra-communal conflicts, see below, p. 155 ff.

⁶⁴ İKB 2, f. 30v, no. 3 (10.7.1613). Yalpa continued to be prominent in the Christian community: in the year 1620 he shows up among the representatives in a piece of litigation against three *yasakçıs* of the town. See İKB 11, p. 2, no. 3 (22.6-1.7.1620).

⁶⁵ İKB 2, f. 30v, no. 4 (10.7.1613). The accusation was that Simo lent money at a rate of interest higher than the legal one (*mu'āmele-i ğayr-ı şer'īye ile*). Despite this affair, Simo continued to be prominent in the community: in the year 1627 he is found among the representatives in a protocol concerning the appointment of the *kethüda*. See İKB 11, p. 103, no. 3 (25.10.1627).

⁶⁶ İKB 19, f. 1v, no. 3 (24.9.1648).

nouncing judgement, but actually sided with the plaintiffs and interfered directly in the community's internal order, in this instance by prohibiting the two elders from meddling in the village's affairs. In both cases, the court seems to have applied the law correctly: it did not recognize the decision of the community's leadership as binding for its members, but judged both cases in favor of the injured private individuals concerned. Nevertheless, the close connection of both pieces of litigation with the discredit or overthrow of a part of the community's leadership makes us wonder whether the court pronounced this judgement from a spirit of justice only⁶⁷. Furthermore, there are enough examples from later times illustrating the court's part as an arbiter in intra-communal conflicts, even in areas with traditionally powerful communities, so that we are justified in mistrusting any all too simple explanations⁶⁸. It would be plausible to assume that in both cases the court chose to side with one party and, with the power of its authority, helped this group to prevail over its rival. The formulas used in both protocols, emphasizing the general outcry of the population against the accused⁶⁹, show the effort of the

⁶⁷ The Ottoman court was not hostile towards communal authority. In the year 1627, it did not challenge the claims of the community over private individuals and gave the *kethüda* permission to collect money from persons refusing to pay their share of certain common expenses. See İKB 11, p. 10, no. 2 (27.4-6.5.1627). In the judicial records of sixteenth-century Jerusalem, Amnon Cohen has found even clearer cases of the court's siding with the community. See A. COHEN 1996, *art. cit.*: p. 80.

⁶⁸ Very important in this respect is a conflict within the Christian community of Samos at the turn of the eighteenth century, which lasted for more than twenty years and engulfed the whole island. This conflict between the party of the "Karmanioloï" and that of the "Kalikantzari designation" took place in the context of the French Revolution and the Russo-Ottoman war. While the designation "Kalikantzari" (goblins) stood for the notables of the island and the representatives of the old order, the name of the "revolutionary" (i.e. Karmanioloï) party derives from the French *carmagnole*. In spite of these "modern" features, the feud was pursued in a very traditional way: during a phase of aggravation between 1807 and 1809, both parties resorted to the Ottoman authorities in order to prevail over their respective rival. The notables enjoyed the support of the local authorities, while the "revolutionaries" tried to gain the favour of the Kapudan Paşa. A petition addressed to the latter, dating from June 20, 1808, follows a very well known pattern: there, the "Karmanioloï" accuse of abuses three prominent Christian notables, as well as the *kadi* and the *voyvoda*, state that they are desperate and ready to flee the island, declare that they are faithful *reaya* of their lord, and petition for the removal of the three notables, as well as the punishment of all wrongdoers. About this conflict, see Epameinōndas STAMATIADÈS, *Samiaka (The history of Samos)*, vol. 2 (Samos, 1881): 78-94. The petition is published, in its presumably original Greek version, on pp. 82-85.

⁶⁹ In the first protocol, the Christians appear to come to court in a body (*'umūmen kefere mahalleleri*), the names of the representatives are followed by the rare formula "and all the others, young and old, rich and poor," and the conduct of the bishop's party is described as causing great oppression to the people (*fuqarāya 'azīm zülümdür*). In the

plaintiffs to legitimize their claims, which in the end were backed up by the moral legitimization of the court's judgement. Especially for the faction currently in opposition, the court, representing the power of the state, was undoubtedly the most desired ally in cases of a persisting conflict inside the community. The rival parties "used" the court in order to prevail, while the latter in its turn seized the opportunity to strengthen its role as the main local authority, by showing a readiness to interfere.

5. *The town*

It has been already mentioned that, contrary to the Christian community, the collectivity known as "the Muslims of the town" has no significant presence in the judicial records. This, however, does not mean that the Muslim population did not participate in any collective activity at all; they did so in several cases, but as a part of the broader collectivity known as the "town". When the entire town was involved, the population was almost always represented by the Muslim notables. The formulas used to describe the collectivity of "the town" are usually very short: "the notables and the rest of the town population", "the notables and the common people (*fuqarā*)" or simply "the town population". Obviously, these formulas were too standardized to constitute a proper expression for the general consensus of the townspeople. For once, in a protocol of 1620, the court scribe used instead the expression "the *eşraf*, *imams*, *hatibs*, as well as the other [sic] tanners and shoemakers and the whole town population⁷⁰." In this case, the emphasis on urban solidarity was particularly appropriate: the protocol records the townspeople's request to the court to forbid Jewish merchants from Selanik (Thessaloniké) the purchase of dairy products and raw wool in the Kara Ferye district. This extraordinary document, which aims at supporting local manufactures, relates to a conflict between the Jewish manufacturers of woollens from Kara Ferye and those from Selanik and must have been initiated by the local Jewish community⁷¹. The representatives of the townspeople in this case were four *efendis* and one *çelebi* from the body of the *eşraf*, as well as two *çelebis* and one *efendi* from that of the *imams* and *hatibs*. The formula "the other tanners and shoemakers" was pre-

second, the plaintiff declares that the abuses of the accused would soon disperse the people, their conduct is condemned as "pure oppression and true usurpation", and the villagers conclude their testimony by saying that the accused do not cease their abuses.

⁷⁰ İKB 6, f. 33v, no. 2 (28.4.1620).

⁷¹ About this conflict, see E. GARA, *art. cit.*

sumably used in order to denote the representatives of the town's guilds, but there are no personal names recorded. It is, however, more than probable that this unique request was made upon the initiative of the guilds as well, not only because it related to a market affair, but also because craftsmen seem indeed to have been involved in resolutions concerning important local issues. In a protocol of 1639 recording the dispute of the people of Kara Ferye with the inhabitants of the villages of Maruşa and Seli due to illegal cultivation of some of the district's summer pastures, the town's delegation in court numbered four *ayan* and two tanners, one of them bearing the title *çelebi*⁷².

It seems that in most of the cases in which the townspeople collectively appear⁷³, they resorted to the court because they wanted an official corroboration of resolutions already taken, as well as the court's support in implementing them. These protocols do not relate to any litigation against private individuals or other collectivities, but each time they record the townspeople's requesting the court to put an end to a deplorable state of affairs by taking certain measures proposed by the plaintiffs. For example, in the protocol relating to the sale of dairy products and raw wool, the statement of the townspeople describing the injuries caused by the commercial activity of the Selanik Jews ends as follows :

“We request (*taleb éderüz*) that the owners of the sheep be ordered (*tenbih olunub*) not to sell any milk and raw wool to the aforementioned Jews, and that the villages, in which every year these Jews have constructed sheep-folds and collected cheese and butter, be ordered from now on not to let them construct any sheep-folds in the [aforementioned] villages. Let also the *zabit* of the district (*žābīṭ-ı vilāyet*) arrest and punish the Jews in the aforementioned way, in case he finds any of them collecting milk and raw wool.”

⁷² İKB 15, f. 94v, no. 2 (24.5-2.6.1639). There is no information as to why the tanners' guild had such a privileged position.

⁷³ Apart from the two protocols already mentioned, there are five others : İKB 2, f. 10r, no. 1 (22.4.1613) which records the request to punish persons in the service of *kadis*, *çavuşes*, *sipahis* and *yeniçeris*, in case they abuse people bringing to town cereals and cattle ; İKB 2, f. 10r, no. 2 (22.4.1613) which records the request to remove the oppressive Arab Mirza subaşı from the office of the *voyyoda*'s *subaşı* ; İKB 9, f. 16v, no. 3 (13-22.2.1621) which records the new *narh* for bread fixed with the consent of the whole town population ; İKB 11, p. 153, no. 1 (7-16.3.1628) which relates to the *mukataa* of the boat service of the river İnce Kara (see below, p. 20) ; and İKB 11, p. 159, no. 3 (7-16.3.1628) which relates to the *mukataa* of the town's market dues (see below, p. 158).

The court responded by adopting these measures: the protocol ends immediately after the recording of the request with the words “the relevant orders have been given” (*veğh-i meşrūh üzere tenbih olunub*).

There are two further cases, dating both from the year 1628, that deserve special attention. Both times, the townspeople decided to intervene in affairs which actually lay within the competence of the *voyvoda*. In the first, the overflow of the river İnce Kara (Haliakmōn) compelled them to request the court to entrust five inhabitants of the village of Graboşa with the *mukataa* of the boat service for the term of a year⁷⁴. In the second instance, the town population, finding that the price situation in the local market had got out of control after the end of the former *muhtesibs*' term of office, requested the court to appoint new *muhtesibs*. The request was granted and the *mukataa* entrusted to three prominent Muslims of the town for the term of a year and for the amount of 110,000 *akçe*; their guarantor was an equally prominent member of the Christian community⁷⁵.

These last resolutions must have been caused by an extraordinary delay in the *iltizam* of the town's taxes and do not seem to have established a precedent. These resolutions, as well as the other protocols previously mentioned, testify to the local society's ability to organize collective action in case of need. Of course, the rare appearance of such documents shows that there did not exist a body of representatives of the town entrusted with the management of local affairs on a regular basis. Yet in case of a serious threat to the townspeople's common interests or to the town's order, there apparently existed ways that made cooperation between the various segments of the local society possible. It would be naive to believe that the whole population was really involved in the taking of such decisions; and, undoubtedly, they would have been impossible without the active participation or at least the consent of the town's Muslim notables. Nevertheless, the documentation suggests that, in these few cases at least, the *ayan* did not act of their own accord but in cooperation with the guilds, as well as with the Jewish and the Christian communities of the town.

It is impossible to answer the question why a cooperation between the *ayan* and *reaya* or between Muslims and Christians came about only in

⁷⁴ İKB 11, p. 153, no. 1 (7-16.3.1628). The *mukataa* was entrusted (*emānet tariğiyle der-'uhde olunmaq*) to them for the amount of 12,000 *akçe*.

⁷⁵ İKB 11, p. 159, no. 3 (7-16.3.1628).

these particular cases and not in others. Why was it only the Christian community that pressed charges against the *yasakçıs* of the town in two different instances (1613 and 1620) accusing them of exorbitant taxation and abuses and requesting their removal from office⁷⁶? Should we believe that they overtaxed only the Christian craftsmen and merchants? Could it be that Christians constituted the majority of the injured population, or perhaps their communal organization allowed a more effective and rapid reaction? The issue becomes more complicated in view of both the nature of the requests and the way they were made. In the first case, the Christians, after describing the abuses of two *yasakçıs*, declared not merely that they did not wish these two persons to stay in office, but that they did not wish any *yasakçıs* at all. The court adopted this view and, admitting that these persons had been oppressive and that there was no need for *yasakçıs* in Kara Ferye, ordered their removal⁷⁷. In the second case, the Christians resorted first to the *kadi* of Yenişehir (Larisa). Subsequently, the community, provided with a letter ordering the removal of the wrongdoers from office, took three *yasakçıs* to the Kara Ferye court and requested the implementation of the orders, which actually occurred. There is no information as to why the Christians involved precisely the *kadi* of Yenişehir in this affair, but it is more than probable that they would not have gone so far, if they had been certain that they could easily persuade the court of their native town. Should we interpret this case as evidence of bad relations between the Christian community and the court? Or was the reason for the involvement of the foreign *kadi* that at that particular time, the *yasakçıs* happened to have more influence on the local court than the Christians?

⁷⁶ İKB 2, f. 31r, no. 4 (11.7.1613) and İKB 11, p. 2, no. 3 (22.6-1.7.1620). The decision of 1620 was once more corroborated in 1627. See İKB 11, p. 2, no. 4 (28.4.1627): “According to the request of the aforementioned Christians (i.e. the Christians of the town of Kara Ferye), and in the aforementioned manner, orders have been given by the court, not to let any more *yasakçıs* come from now on.”

⁷⁷ The Christians’ statement ends as follows: “We do not wish (*rižāmuz yoqdur*) the aforementioned persons as *yasakçıs* and we do not want any more *yasakçıs* (*yasaqçi dağı istemezüz*). And although we do not want any *yasakçıs* in the nearby markets and fairs, they come and say “We take you and leave”, and they take all our money and oppress us (*zülüm ederler*). From now on we do not wish them to be *yasakçıs*.” The court’s decision is as follows: “Because it has been indeed established that the aforementioned *yasakçıs* were oppressive, and because there is no need for a *yasakçı* in the aforementioned town, there have been given orders by the court to stop the aforementioned persons from holding the office.”

The Christian and the Muslim community may very well have cooperated in certain matters, but there also existed many points of friction between them, and their relations may have suffered a crisis from time to time⁷⁸. There is no evidence, however, that the court was in the habit of favoring the Muslims over the other segments of the population, although this impression may be due to the nature of our sources and not to the court's impartiality. In this respect, it is very interesting to learn that in 1620, the Muslim community was compelled to send a petition to Istanbul, so as to obtain an order forbidding the Christians to slaughter their pigs inside the town⁷⁹. Unfortunately, there is no information as to whether the request had been initially addressed to the Kara Ferye court and not granted, or whether the community decided not to involve the local *kadi* at all but to resort directly to the center.

CONCLUSION

Our research on the seventeenth-century Kara Ferye district has resulted in a variety of information, which allows an insight into the collective organization of Ottoman subjects. According to our sources, the population was organized in territorially based communities — within the town proper there existed communities based upon religion — under the leadership of a body of presumably elected representatives. These communities were for the most part corporations with funds of their own. Their competences were by no means limited to the performance of certain “administrative duties” within the framework of the Ottoman administration, such as the collection of taxes or the keeping of the public order. They actively took part in the processes of taxation by redistributing or even imposing taxes, as well as by negotiating on taxation matters with the Ottoman authorities. Central to the communal functions was also the management of the common fund and real property: communities borrowed and lent money, sold and bought real estate, managed

⁷⁸ According to the Kara Ferye *cizye defteris* kept in the Başbakanlık Arşivi in Istanbul, sometime between 1595 and 1600 the church of the neighborhood of Menlik Manastırı was transformed into a mosque and its Christian inhabitants were forced to abandon their properties and move to other neighborhoods. One can easily imagine the effects of this event on local society and especially on relations between the Christian and the Muslim communities. See MM (Maliyeden Müdevver) 14725 (21.5.1594-9.5.1595), p. 13-14, and MM 14961 (16.3.1600-5.3.1601), p. 15.

⁷⁹ İKB 9, f. 18r, no. 2 (9-18.9.1620).

pious foundations. Tensions between the communal body and its leadership or between opposed parties seem to have been for the most part resolved within the communities in question. Nevertheless, more important — or perhaps more complex — disputes were taken to court, the arbiter *par excellence* in intra-communal conflicts, and this authority was thus given the opportunity to intervene in local politics. The Kara Ferye material has also shed light on the ability of local society to organize large-scale collective action in case of need. Admittedly, there are only a few relevant cases on record, but at least from time to time cooperation between different segments of the population was achieved, while under normal circumstances these groups pursued their separate goals. Toward the middle of the seventeenth century local society became more involved in taxation and administration, which increased the importance of not only the body of the *ayan* and *eşraf* or of the guilds, but also that of the communities.

At this stage of research, I do not feel competent to attempt a generalization on the basis of these conclusions, although they fit in well with the available information from Southern Greece and Bulgaria. We need more case studies on different areas, dealing with different periods of time, before we can come up with an interpretative scheme — or perhaps with more than one — concerning the communal organization of the Ottoman population. Judicial records can be a valuable source for this kind of study, but they have to be used with caution: documentary sources were not compiled for the convenience of later historians, and have to be treated as what they primarily are, namely as texts.

Eleni GARA, *In Search of Communities in Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Sources: The Case of the Kara Ferye District*

By the end of the eighteenth century, the corporate community was a widespread form of social organization of the Ottoman subjects in both urban and rural areas of the Balkans and Anatolia. Nevertheless, still very little is known about the first stages in the evolution of Ottoman communities. The present paper tries to shed light on the early history of communal formations in the Southern Balkans with the help of Ottoman archival sources, and uses as a case study the district of Kara Ferye (Veria/Beroia in Northern Greece) in the seventeenth century.

Eleni GARA, *À la recherche des communautés dans les sources ottomanes du XVII^e siècle: le cas du district de Kara Ferye*

À la fin du XVIII^e siècle, la communauté corporative est devenue une forme d'organisation sociale très répandue entre les sujets ottomans dans les territoires urbains et ruraux des Balkans et de l'Anatolie. Néanmoins on connaît encore peu de choses sur la première phase de l'évolution des communautés ottomanes. L'article essaie d'illustrer l'histoire des formations communales dans les Balkans du Sud grâce aux archives ottomanes à partir de l'exemple du district de Kara Ferye (Veria/Beroia en Grèce du Nord) au XVII^e siècle.