

MAN AND THE STATE IN SERBIA, FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO  
THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY: A STUDY IN CENTRALIST  
AND ANTI-CENTRALIST CONFLICT

Two antagonistic tendencies vie throughout Serbia's recent history—one moving toward greater centralism and control over the individual, the other reacting against this centripetal pressure<sup>1</sup>. The conflict between man and the state is a recurrent theme that ebbs and flows, modified and exacerbated by the struggle of the Great Powers, the interaction of evolving social strata with the institutional structure, as well as unfolding economic influences upon the social and national consciousness. Moreover, the emerging Serbian state conflicted with powerful traditions of local administration from the medieval era to the nineteenth century. This study focuses attention on a major aspect of the administrative history of the turbulent clash between centralist and anti-centralist impulses. Figures and events kaleidoscopically shift and change and the two countervailing impulses assume new forms, but the conflict continues unabated.

The roots of the conflict are deeply embedded in the earliest period of Serbian history. After their arrival in the area below the Danube in the fifth century, the Slavs were slow to develop a state. Tribal forms persisted and broke down only gradually in the period from the seventh to the tenth century<sup>2</sup>. The survival of patriarchal, clan-associated cultural patterns well into

1. The only study of this conflict is Fedor Nikic, *Lokalna Uprava u Srbiji u XIX veka* (Local Administration in Serbia in the Nineteenth Century) (Belgrade, 1927). Nikic's work is simplistic and suffers from a one dimensional methodological focus that considers only internal causal influences and excludes external as well as social and economic determinants.

2. The most extensive work on the ancient and medieval history of the Serbs remains Constantine Jirecek, *Istorija Srba* (History of the Serbs), (tr. by Jovan Radonic), 2 vols., 1952. Two chapters from this work dealing with Nemanjid Serbia appear in French translation as Constantine Jirecek, *Civilization serbe au moyen age*, (Paris, 1920). A specialized study by the same writer on medieval Serbian society is Constantine Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, Denkschriften der Wiener Akademie, vols. 56-58, 64-65, pts. 1-4.

the nineteenth century and their antagonism to centrally directed, state building efforts became one of the important currents of Serbian history.

Tribal rulers were called archons, according to later inscriptions, and dux in Croatia, parts of Herzegovina and originally in Bosnia. Later under Byzantine tutelage, territorial districts were formed called zupe, headed by zupani, one of whom, Stephen Nemanjic, imposed his ascendancy over all the others and took the title of Great Zupan. The title knez (prince) which was reserved only for members of the royal family at this time but later became associated with local functionaries as well, first appears in documents about 1050<sup>3</sup>.

The Greeks called the region inhabited by the Slavs in the Balkan interior between Zadar, Salonika and the Rhodope Mountains, Sclavenia or Sclavonia. A portion of the Adriatic coastal region together with its hinterland, roughly corresponding to present-day Montenegro was called Diokle (lat., Serb. Duklja) and later in the eleventh century it became known as Zeta. A second region, Rassia, (also Rascia, in Serb. Raska) emerged in the southwestern interior at about the same time. The towns of Rassia were newly formed trading centers of Greek or Roman origin, with a motley population of Germans (Saxons from the mining areas), merchants from the coastal towns of Kotor, Dubrovnik, Berane, Korcula, Zadar, as well as Florentines, Albanians, Serbs, Vlachs and Greeks<sup>4</sup>. From the reign of the Nemanjic dynasty, in the opinion of Jirecek and other historians, the Serbian state was similar to those of western Europe<sup>5</sup>. A native nobility such as existed in western Europe did not appear among the South Slavs until the tenth century and only became consolidated in the twelfth century. Below the king (kralj) were the great nobles, velmuz (or velmoza), literally "great man" or vlastele as they later became known in Serbia and Bosnia, and the lesser nobility, vlastelici. The nobles engaged in constant efforts to augment their own power at the expense of the state and dynasty and were "short-sighted people, thoroughly selfish without any notion of the creation and maintenance of a strong state occupied only with their family and class interest"<sup>6</sup>. Their growing power stifled the advancement of state power earlier than in Hungary and Poland.

From the fourteenth century the plebian class divided into two groups,

3. Jirecek, *Istorija Srba*, I, pp. 69, 258.

4. On the medieval Serbian towns see Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, 56, pp. 60ff. See also Jirecek, *Civilization serbe au moyen age*, p. 23ff.

5. Jirecek, *Istorija Srba*, I, p. 255.

6. Jirecek, *Istorija Srba*, I, p. 255-56.

the Seabri<sup>7</sup>, those connected with the cultivation of the land, and the Vlasi descendants of the old Roman population of the Danubian region who had retreated into mountain pastoral settlements, Katuni, where they led a semi-nomadic existence<sup>8</sup>. The Vlah chiefs were called knezovi, translated by the Ragusans as "comes" (comes catuni) or sometimes celnici (fr. Serb. celo, head)<sup>9</sup>. The largest category of seabri were the somewhat obscure merope, prevalent only in eastern Serbia, who were bound to the soil but possessed the right to use the land in perpetuity (meropaska bastina), and the otroci, slaves, probably derived from war prisoners, debtors, and fugitive seabri. An intermediate category was the sokalnici who were house slaves, cooks, bakers and butchers. The dwellings of the seabri and Vlasi were often alongside one another, and though they were forbidden to intermarry, the interdiction was often evaded.

Evidence of class relations is still scanty but it may be inferred from the code of Stephan Dusan (1349), which contains many interdictions and penalties for evasion of the heavy tax burdens, or of enforced work on seigneurial and church estates, and for flight, that surveillance and repression of the lowest social groups were chronic and severe<sup>10</sup>. Violations were punished by physical mutilation; the frequent references in the historical sources to "people without arms, noses or ears, with branded faces and others who had been blinded", probably attested to the constant repression of the lower classes<sup>11</sup>. Recent writers have pointed to such social pressures and the response

7. The term "seabri" appeared in Russia, Lithuania, Greece and the Ionian Islands where it generally connoted a kind of villein or semi-peasant. Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, 56, p. 74.

8. The Romanized Danubian population was called Romani or Latini along the Adriatic coast. From 1200-1250 they were referred to as Vlahs (pl. Vlasi in Serb.) in Serbian and Italian documents. After 1400 the term Vlahs originally used to designate the Romanized Illyrian population of the coastal towns—sailors, merchants, artisans, and fishermen—was only used to designate the nomadic, pastoral population. Jirecek, *Istorija Srba*, I, p. 88. On the various kinds of Vlahs, (Vlachs) and "Valachiae" (Vlah-settled areas) throughout the Balkans—Old Valachia (Stari Vlah), Upper Valachia in Epirus, Valachia Major and Valachia Minor in Greece and Macedonia, the Morlaks (Maurovalachi) of the Dinaric mountain zone, White Valachia (Wallachia), Black Valachia (Moldavia) etc. see Traian Stoianovich, *A Study in Balkan Civilization*, (1967), p. 112 f.

9. Jirecek, *Istorija Srba*, I, p. 271.

10. For an English translation of the Code with commentaries see Malcolm Burr, "The Code of Czar Dushan", *The Slavonic and East European Review* (London), XXVIII, 29, Nov. 1949, pt. 1, pp. 198-217 and April 1950, pt. 2, pp. 516-39. See also Nikola Radojicic, *Dušanov Zakonik* (Dusan's code) (Novi Sad, 1950), pp. 2-5.

11. Jirecek, *Istorija Srba*, I, p. 298; also Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalter-*

of massive flight by the peasantry as evidence of repression and social conflict in Nemanjid Serbia though admittedly there is little evidence of uprisings and disturbances. Resistance took the form of attacks on caravans on the roads, outbreaks of fires on the property of the nobility, kidnapping, outright refusal to work and, finally, in extreme cases, murder<sup>12</sup>. The penalty for flight to another region was branding on the skin, or singeing of the beard and slicing off of the nose (art. 201). Other articles in the code prohibit giving asylum to runaway peasants (art. 140), or declare that the fugitives, whether residing on church lands or in katun settlements, must return to their original domiciles (art. 23). As a result of such restrictions the peasantry had gradually lost most of its freedom by the end of the fourteenth century.

In medieval Serbia a variety of local officials are mentioned in the code of Dusan and other sources of the period (knez, primicur, vojnik, celnik, predstajnik and staresina) but these seem to have been representatives and appointees of the great landowners and petty nobles rather than functionaries of the village communities whose rights, like those of the peasantry, were constantly being restricted by the landowning class<sup>13</sup>. The interior of Serbia offers scant documentary evidence of meetings involving commoners. In eastern Serbia evidence of local or village assemblies is scarce and then mostly to ascertain village boundaries and the division of duties and obligations<sup>14</sup>. In the western regions and along the coast where the number of freemen was larger, assemblies either of nobles and freemen or else later only of nobles were more in evidence, and these took the form of assemblies of the zupa or the entire district. On the coastal islands assemblies of the plebian populace were also frequent and decisions on local matters were arrived at by vote<sup>15</sup>.

*lichen Serbien*, vol. 56, p. 13 ff. Burr's comment that mutilation "is characteristic of the period rather than the people" and that its substitution for the death penalty is a sign of "Christian humanization" does not relieve its use as evidence of social repression. Moreover, the continued use of such barbaric practices as trial by boiling water in medieval Serbia at a time when this method of justice had been discarded in western Europe does not seem to support evidence of the influence of "Christian humanization" on Serbian justice. Burr, *The Code of Czar Dushan*, pt. 1, p. 202.

12. Nikola Vuco, *Privredna Istorija Srbije* (The Economic History of Serbia) (Belgrade, 1955), pp. 64-74.

13. Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, vol. 56, p. 70. See also Ruzica Guzina, *Knezina i postanak srpske buržoaske države* (The Knezina and the Rise of the Serbian Bourgeois State) (1955), p. 7.

14. Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, 56, p. 70 n 9; also Stojan Novakovic, *Selo* (The Village) (Belgrade, 1943), p. 78-79.

15. Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, 56, p. 22.

Exceptions are an assembly of nobles and commoners (*vlastele i chora*) summoned by the archbishop of Prizren in the Tetovo region of the Vardar Valley and also a similar meeting summoned by Stephen Dusan at Strumica<sup>16</sup>. Interdiction in the law code of Stephan Dusan against participation in or the organization of peasant assemblies as a crime punishable by branding on the face or ear lopping (art. 69) probably, according to Jirecek, Radojicic and others, refers more to assemblies of commoners meeting to conspire against the nobility or as an estate<sup>17</sup>. On the strength of the prohibition in the code against such assemblies and the paucity of evidence on meetings of village assemblies, Stojan Novakovic doubted that wide autonomy existed in the villages of medieval Serbia<sup>18</sup>. However, Novakovic's finding rests upon very little evidence and is therefore inconclusive<sup>19</sup>.

In medieval Serbia, in theory, all land belonged to the king and was parcelled out to the nobility and the church. Land tenure took two distinct forms: *bastina* or hereditary holding similar to allodial lands in western Europe, reverting back when the heirs of the original owner died out and, after the thirteenth century, lands held in *pronoia*, that is entailing the right of usufruct, but not hereditary ownership<sup>20</sup>. Land held in *pronoia* by the church, or nobility could not be sold or otherwise disposed of as could hereditary holdings. With the elimination of the Serbian aristocracy after the Ottoman conquest, *pronoia*, which originated in Byzantine institutional practices, and *bastina* property were transformed into analogous Ottoman land tenure traditions.

An important social institution and cultural influence among the Serbs was the *zadruga* or extended family mentioned in the code and probably stemming from the tribal customs of the Slavs<sup>21</sup>. The *zadruga* took the form of the single family household in which one father lived with many brothers

16. Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, 56, p. 22.

17. Jirecek, *Istorija Srba*, I, p. 271; Jirecek, *Staat und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Serbien*, 56, p. 70; also Traian Stoianovich, *A Study in Balkan Civilization*, p. 129.

18. Novakovic, *Selo*, p. 78 f.

19. Guzina, *Knezina i postanak srpske buržoaske države*, pp. 8-9.

20. On *pronoia* and *bastina* property see G. Ostrogorsky, *Pour la féodalité byzantine* (Brussels, 1954) and Branislav M. Nedeljkovic, *Istorija bastinske svojine* (The History of Bastina Property) (Belgrade, 1936).

21. On the *zadruga* see Stojan Novakovic, *La Zadruga* (Paris, 1905) and the massive study of the French sociologist Emile Sicard, *La Zadruga sud-slave* (1941). The term *zadruga* was not used until the 19th century and the people called it "kuca", "hiza" and "skupscina". See E. A. Hammel, "Household Structure in Fourteenth Century Macedonia", Paper, 1972, p. 5 n 7.

and sons under one roof and those involving the joining together of many families related by ties of blood. The *zadruga* generally involved four factors: wealth in goods and property jointly owned; work carried out in common; lives shared together; and relationships based upon blood ties. According to Novaković, family unions like the *zadruga* go back to all peoples of the Aryan family, Greeks, Romans, Hindus and Slavs and in each case underwent a different evolution. Thus, among the Romans the *paterfamilias* dominated the family while among the Serbs there was equality among all family members<sup>22</sup>.

The *zadruga* probably also stemmed from the social order of kings and nobles who fought and plebeians who worked, and the evolution of the *pleme* (tribus, gens, clan) within which particular forms of land ownership developed<sup>23</sup>. In Montenegro all lands were divided between the *pleme* and families or houses (*kuce*), and only woods and pasture lands were held in common. Novaković offers an additional reason for the origin of the *zadruga*: the influence of domestic religion may have determined fathers to keep their sons close to them in order to have descendants who would pray for them and their ancestors after their death<sup>24</sup>. Thus, he concludes that the *zadruga* evolved in the distant past under the influence of domestic religion, moral law, and the economic and political needs of the time. During the Nemanja period the *zadruga* became institutionalized through the code's assignment of collective responsibility upon a household (*kuca*) for criminal acts, regulations concerning the division of property, and the collection of taxes by the "hearth" (*dimnina*), a Byzantine-derived practice.

The *zadruga* also nurtured with itself equality as its first principle, within the simplest hierarchical structure. The head of the collective household was not always either the father or the eldest male, but was generally elected and acknowledged to be the most intelligent male. The *domacica*, head of the

22. Novaković, *La Zadrouga*, p. 41. Hammel also accepts the Indo-European origin of the *zadruga*. Hammel, "Household Structure in Fourteenth Century Macedonia", p. 1.

23. Novaković, *La Zadrouga*, p. 37. The origin of the *pleme* is uncertain. The Jireček-Sufflay school contend it stemmed from the Vlah *katun* while Cvijic and Erdeljanovic regard it as derived from the medieval state and perhaps even from the tribal life of the ancient South Slavs. See B. Pavicevic, *Stvaranje crnogorski države* (Creation of the Montenegrin State) (Belgrade, 1955), pp. 10-11.

24. Novaković, *La Zadrouga*, 40. Hammel speculates that the availability of land was "a very fundamental economic condition for the *zadruga*'s existence...particularly in the west and north, while the more stagnant economy of the south and east discouraged it...". Hammel, "Household Structure in Fourteenth Century Macedonia", p. 61.

females in the *zadruga*, was also frequently elected. "The [Serbian] man is a *zadrugar*", comments a French observer of Serbian society. "From his adolescence he deliberates and participates within his family which remains habitually the cadre of his life"<sup>25</sup>. While the father represents authority, protection and security, supplemented by additional figures like the *kum* or godfather and *pobratimstvo*, foster brothers and sisters, he is at the same time a weak figure in the mind of the Serb child because of the diffuse nature of his authority in the *zadruga*<sup>26</sup>. The forms of collaboration in the *zadruga* were repeated in the larger macrocosm of the social body: "collegial direction with equality among members, authority being only delegated"<sup>27</sup>.

During the medieval period two major cultural influences co-existed and developed: the romanized cultural pattern prevalent in the coastal region and the northern areas and the patriarchal, semi-pastoral *zadruga* culture of the Dinaric mountain region. Following the Ottoman conquest and the disintegration of the Nemanjid state the central valleys became depopulated and desolate during the period from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. After the battle of Kossovo (1389), thousands upon thousands of Serbs glutted the slave markets or were recruited as mercenaries<sup>28</sup>. The French slavist Emile Haumant reports that even before the fall of the Serbian despotates the Ottoman Turks netted more than 100.000 captives in one raid alone<sup>29</sup>. The nobility was either captured or killed, fled to the mountains or simply emigrated. Those who remained became declassé village or local chiefs. A diaspora of refugees from the interior regions beginning in the fourteenth century moved into Slavonia, Srem, Transylvania and other parts of Hungary and even in some cases to Poland and Russia. At the invitation of the princes of Ferrara and Naples some inhabitants of the western areas relocated to those towns, while many nobles in the interior migrated to the safer coastal region. In the latter half of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the reports of travellers describe the once fertile, heavily populated Serbian region as a desolate, depopulated wasteland whose few

25. Yvonne Castellan, *La Culture serbe au seuil de l'indépendance (1800-1840)* (Paris, 1967), p. 51.

26. Castellan, *La Culture serbe au seuil de l'indépendance*, p. 87. In his study of the Chilandar register Hammel found 20% of the households were headed by females. Hammel, "Household Structure in Fourteenth Century Macedonia", p. 41.

27. Castellan, *La Culture serbe au seuil de l'indépendance*, p. 68.

28. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Eng. trans.) (1973), II, p. 665.

29. Emile Haumant, *La Formation de la Yougoslavie* (Paris, 1930), p. 81.

remaining inhabitants lived a primitive and marginal existence.

During the period following the Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, the Vlah pastoral population, which was still rather numerous in the Balkans, moved into the interior and mountain regions and replaced or intermingled with the settled village inhabitants, many of whom had either migrated elsewhere, perished or simply melted away<sup>30</sup>. A great wave of Vlasi spread over the entire Balkans from northern Serbia to the Pindus Mountains. At this time patriarchal institutions like the clan, the zadruga, and katun were already in decline or disappearing under pressure from the process of territorialization through the establishment of the zupa and the emergence of the territorial state. Evidence of this is the complete disappearance of some of the leading clans like the Mataruga (or Mataruzic), Luzani, Malonsici, etc., in Montenegro and Hercegovina. The penetration of primitive Vlah herdsmen into the zupa revived the disintegrating pleme and the older patriarchal culture. Some clans like the Mirkovici which were dissolving under the impact of territorialization, were revitalized by the pleme. Turkish sources declare that a wave of Vlah herdsmen flowed into Smederevo sandzak and a large part of Krusevac and Vidin sandzak. In Smederevo sandzak in 1476 there were about 7600 Vlah households as compared to 15,000 peasant households on landed estates<sup>31</sup>. In 1516 the number of Vlah households grew to 12,000. Vlah herdsmen also had their own knezovi and primicurs whose permanency the Ottoman administration guaranteed by a special Vlah law. Turkish laws of the period referring to the autonomous position of the Vlasi state that "the kadi could not go among them" and that, by virtue of their function as auxiliary border troops, they were exempt from many feudal dues<sup>32</sup>. In Smederevo and part of Krusevac sandzak there were a large number of these knezovi, some 104, of whom 11 were Moslems, and 24 primicurs<sup>33</sup>. Some held their lands in hereditary proprietorship (bastina) and others as feudal fiefs (timars). Some like the members of the Bakic family, relatives of

30. On the recurrent shifts in population see A. Dabinovic, "Early Balkan Migrations", *Slavonic and East European Rev.*, 16, pp. 393-411. The most important student of the migrations and the Dinaric culture is Jovan Cvijic's classic, *La Peninsule balkanique* (Paris, 1918). Cvijic's sociological contributions are discussed in Svetozar Culibrk, "Cvijic's Sociological Research Into Society in the Balkans", *British Journal of Sociology*, XXII, No. 4, Dec. 1971.

31. Branislav Djurdjev, *Historija naroda Jugoslavije* (History of the Yugoslav people) (Zagreb, 1955), II. p. 84.

32. Djurdjev, *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, II, p. 85.

33. Djurdjev, *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, II, p. 84. Among the *Vlahs* the *primicurs* enjoyed a lower status than the *knezovi*.



Pavle Bakic, the last Serbian despot in Hungary, and the descendants of the old Serbian aristocracy, held their lands under Turkish authority as Christian *spahija*<sup>34</sup>. Gradually the Vlah population merged with the peasantry cultivating the land. The *knezovi* and *primicurs* became heads of the unified autonomous *knezine* (local communities). Their functions consisted of returning runaway peasants to their villages, recruiting labor for work on the roads and bridges and in northern Serbia going on military campaigns in time of war. At the end of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth century the autonomous *knezine* were considerably weakened by the more static conditions of Ottoman feudal society and their functions reduced, while the *knezovi* became village elders (*staresine*) and the *primicur* disappeared as a functionary. The increasing economic and social pressure on the peasantry as the Turkish feudal system developed at the end of the seventeenth century virtually destroyed the autonomous *knezine* under Turkish hegemony.

The Serbian feudal state had also begun to transform the previous semi-nomadic pastoral economy which the Slaves had brought with them when they entered the Balkans into a more settled, agricultural, village-oriented, estate system. The penetration of the Vlah pastoral culture into the more settled feudal agrarian society reversed this development and encouraged, through the greater security and protection a peripatetic existence offered, a return to a more primitive life style. The arrival of the Ottoman Turks at the same time in the Balkans further checked the disintegration of the *pleme* and the older patriarchal society and even fostered their preservation by substituting for the Serbian feudal state what one writer has called the "Greek-Turkish-Cincar-carsija society" and an "anational" and less dynamic culture<sup>35</sup>. When repopulation of the desolate interior regions of Serbia occurred by emigrants from the western and southern portion of the country gradually in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the newcomers brought with them the older patriarchal culture of the Dinaric mountain zone.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century three demographic elements predominated in Belgrade Pashalik: the old Serbian settlers, the new migrants from the overcrowded western region of Montenegro and Hercegovina; and those from the southern areas of Kossovo and Metohija. In eastern Serbia migrants from the Kossovo and Prizren region predominated who had been

34. Djurdjev, *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, II, p. 87. For a discussion of this interesting figure see Dusan J. Popovic, *Srbi u Vojvodini* (The Serbs in the Vojvodina) (Novi Sad, 1957), pp. 123-132.

35. Guzina, *Knezina i postanak srpske buržoaske države*, p. 10.

forced to move north by pressure from the Turks and incoming Moslemized Albanians, while in the central and western region the settlers came from the Dinaric mountain zone. Along the Drina and in the western Morava Valley half of the influx was from Hercegovina. It was this latter group in central and western Serbia, cultivating its patriarchal life style, that rebelled in the first decade of the nineteenth century when their restored autonomous knezine were disrupted by the entry into Belgrade of marauding Janissary bands. Within this group were also numerous migrants from Montenegro which had always enjoyed an independent existence, without the spahija system, and where agriculture was weak and the pastoral katon, pleme, and zadruga still exercised a strong influence. Vuk Karadzic believed that in Montenegro the pleme and knezine were one and the same thing and that the newly arrived Montenegrin migrants, not knowing any other form of social organization than the pleme, created the knezine according to the form of the pleme. These autonomous knezine evolved within the Ottoman nahija (districts) which had replaced the former zupa of the Serbian feudal state and were the foundation of the patriarchal culture.

Ottoman administration in the Balkans was an outgrowth of a complex estate—and religion-oriented society which, in turn, was a composite of Arab practices based upon the sheria (corpus of law) and the Koran, Byzantine influences, the Seljuk, gazi military tradition and certain Balkan practices<sup>36</sup>. In Ottoman social theory four major estates made up society: the scribes or ulema (interpreters of law and the faith); the warriors or askers; merchants; and finally the cultivators of the soil or raya. As the empire expanded and added new territories the Ottomans adopted a system of millets (communities) to facilitate the administration of the peoples residing in these areas. In all there were four millets: Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Armenians and Jews. The Turks called the Orthodox millet, at the head of which was the patriarch in Constantinople, the Rum (or Roman), millet, and the Christians of the Balkans were simply classified collectively as Orthodox. The millet

36. For an excellent review of the Turkish land tenure and administrative system see Sydney N. Fisher, *Ottoman Feudalism and Its Influence Upon the Balkans*, American Historical Association Paper, December 23, 1951. An evaluation by a number of specialists is Wayne S. Vucinich (with comments by Traian Stoianovich), "The Nature of Balkan Society Under Ottoman Rule", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4, December 1962. Stoianovich rejects Vucinich's view of Ottoman society as a class society, emphasizing the numerous interstitial social strata which made it a heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous society. See also Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Balkans in Tradition* (Berkeley, 1963), Chaps. 2, 2, pp. 56-115. Also H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, I, pp. II, *passim*.

system permitted the subject peoples to retain their customs and traditions and provided them with a considerable measure of autonomy. The Dimmis (or Dthimmis, Dhimmis), "peoples of the Scripture", as the conquered non-Muslim peoples were termed, were merely required to pay a special head tax (*harac* or *cizije*) and could not bear arms or wear the Prophet's color.

The Ottoman system of land tenure or *timariot* was in many ways similar to that of the Serbian state—a derivative of the Byzantine<sup>37</sup>. As in the medieval Serbian state all land under the Ottoman system in theory, belonged to the ruler and land ownership was tied to military or state service. In medieval Serbia ownership of *bastina* land rested on military service by the nobility from which the commoners and clergy were excluded in the code of Dusan (art. 42). Similarly a fief of land or *timar* was awarded on the basis of military service and like the *pronoia* which it resembled was held only in usufruct and on condition of continued military service and could be revoked at any time. It tended, once awarded, to become hereditary in practice. The size of each fief depended on the number of armed retainers each *spahija* or mounted warrior brought with him on campaigns. (The *hass* were the largest fiefs followed by the *ziamet* and *timar*). The *spahija* landlords were entitled to collect fees of one-tenth of each tenant's crop and in some areas it was as high as one-quarter, plus a number of other small feudal dues. By the onset of the nineteenth century the *spahija* landlord class had moved to the towns and had become absentee landlords leaving the collection of taxes to local Serbian officials.

Yugoslav historians Glisa Elezovic and particularly Branislav Djurdjev have traced the evolution of these local officials, i.e., the *knezovi* and *primicurs*, from the fourteenth-eighteenth centuries and have concluded that the Turks consistently recognized the tradition of local chieftains they found operating in Montenegro, Hercegovina, Bosnia and Serbia and steadily expanded their functions and privileges. Djurdjev believes that the somewhat obscure "*bas-knez*" and "*obor-knez*" mentioned in some of the Turkish documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth century were district (*nahije*) *knezovi* who gradually

37. For a recent article dealing with interaction between Byzantine and Islamic institutions see the excellent article of Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Byzantium and Islam: Seven-Seventeenth Century", *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 2, 1968-69, pp. 205-40. On the relationship between the *timar* and *pronoia* Vryonis declares: "The question of the origin of the *timar* and its relation to the Byzantine *pronoia* have been much discussed without any definite solution. The nature of both the conditions under which they were held are strikingly similar as is indeed the very meaning of the words". *Ibid.*, p. 236 n 57.

disappeared in Serbia but survived here and there in Bosnia<sup>38</sup>. It is possible that they may have been survivors of the medieval nobility<sup>39</sup>.

By the sixteenth century documents confirm that if the position of knez had not yet become hereditary by law, it had become so in practice. In an undated Bosnian *berat*—probably from the 1640's—and translated from the Turkish by Djurdjev, confirming Nez Vuk of the village of Donje Jasenica as knez, the latter's functions and duties are mentioned as aiding in the collection of the capitation tax and going on military campaigns when necessary<sup>40</sup>. For this service his *bastina* was free of taxes and other dues and his position, in effect, appears to have been that of a Christian *spahija*. Similar evidence in Bulgaria, Serbia, and other regions indicates that, taking into account local differences, these practices were rather widespread<sup>41</sup>.

In the sixteenth century the Turks were making full use of the local knezovi and confirming them through diplomas (*beratlije*). They were exempted from paying the imperial as well as most other taxes and usually received, in addition, grants of land as Christian *spahija*. These rights and privileges upon their deaths, passed to their heirs. Djurdjev also concludes that the *katun knezovi* and *zupa knevovi* in Belgrade Pashalik were absorbed into the Turkish administration as police and military officials for which services they received tax-free lands. In exchange for these privileges, the knezovi exercised a number of important functions including collecting taxes, maintaining order in the community and acting as liaison agents between the Christian population and the Turkish administration. In the case of the Vlah knezovi they were obligated to go on military campaigns as auxiliaries or assist in the collection of war materials, a practice which may have been derived from the use of warrior-Vlasi in the medieval Serbian state. The knezovi and *primicurs* already in the middle of the sixteenth century, according to some documents, were acting as "assistants" (*cehaja*) in the gathering of taxes and in some areas actually collecting taxes<sup>42</sup>. In sixteenth century Smederevo sandzak both the

38. Branislav Djurdjev, "O knezovima pod turksom upravom" (On the Princes Under Turkish Administration) (SAN, Belgrade, 1949), I, Vol. 1-2, p. 153.

39. By the 17th century they had disappeared in Serbia. The last *bas-knez* died as a British Vice-Consul in Bosnia in 1821. See H. W. V. Temperley, *History of Serbia* (London, 1917), p. 119.

40. Djurdjev, "O knezovima pod turksom upravom", p. 163 ff.

41. Besides certain Bulgarian sources, there is also the *berat* of Knez Anastasa Raskovic, issued in 1722, which states that the *knezes* collected taxes and returned fugitive *raya*. Djurdjev, "O knezovima pod turksom upravom", p. 140-41.

42. Djurdjev, "O knezovima pod turksom upravom", p. 139 f.

knez and primicur were relieved of all taxes and other feudal obligations. The primicur, who was generally subordinate to the knez in the Vlah knezine, held a free allotment of land (slobodna bastina) while the knezovi either held timars as Christian spahija or else free allotments<sup>43</sup>. In some areas the primicur had to pay some feudal dues. The function of these officials was to return runaway peasants and in time of need to collect people for work on the bridges and roads and for defense in time of war. In Smederevo the knez accompanied the sandzakebeg on campaigns in wartime. The Vlah knez and primicur held hereditary office and were succeeded by their sons. With territorialization the Vlah pastoral communities lost their tax privileges and became Vlah raya being incorporated into the raya estate. By the eighteenth century the primicur disappeared altogether, his functions probably being assumed by the village knez. There is a gap between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the district knez either disappeared completely or was reduced to the village level. Documentary sources for this period are still somewhat murky and inconclusive.

The Austro-Turkish wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth century drove the Turks from Serbia and for a time it fell under Habsburg control. During their second occupation of the Belgrade Pashalik (1718-39) the Habsburg government established a mixed civil and military administration. It divided the civil administration into fifteen regions headed by officials called provizori who were assisted in their functions by a number of lesser officials and police (pandur). The Austrians appointed a number of district oberknezovi (or obor-knezovi) who supervised the collection of taxes which were divided between the autonomous knezine, then among villages and individual households by a village knez and kmet. A number of hajduk detachments headed by hajduk captains, usually Serbs from Austria, maintained order. The taxation policy was harsh and exploitative and the Austrian administration was generally corrupt, leaving a rather bad impression on the Serbs. Judicial matters were conducted on several levels, smaller crimes and civil disputes were judged by the knezovi, provizori, and lower level officials, and thereafter by the administration in Belgrade, with the right of final complaint to the Court War Council in Vienna.

An important development during the Austrian occupation was the emergence once again of the autonomous knezine which had functioned within the former Turkish nahije and medieval zupa. Except for certain areas like Stari Vlah and Krajina on the Danube, the earlier autonomous knezine built

43. Djurdjev, *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, II, p. 92.

upon the Vlah knezine had died out in the latter part of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth centuries. When the Austrian army evacuated Serbia in 1739 the provizori and other Austrian officials disappeared. The returning Turks restored the spahija system, the nahija, and the former Turkish administrative organs, retaining the autonomous knezine and ober-kneze, now an *idée fixe* in the minds of the Serbian people. The latter functioned as before but were elected rather than appointed as they had been under the Austrian occupation.

In the second half of the eighteenth century trade increased at an accelerated rate in Serbia which became an important center for commerce passing between southeastern Europe, central Europe, and the Near East. Belgrade and Zemun across the Danube became important export and import transit points. Customs taxes from Zemun alone provided Austria with an income of 100,000 florins per year by 1780, a considerable sum for that period. The ferry traffic in people and goods between Belgrade and Zemun was so great in 1787 that it leased for 15,000 florins<sup>44</sup>. As a consequence of the rather orderly development between 1739-88, the population of Serbia which, according to Austrian records had sunk to 60,000 persons in the eve of the second Habsburg occupation in 1739, rose again to 600,000 persons by the start of the nineteenth century. This orderly development was now interrupted by a resumption of the Habsburg-Ottoman struggle in Serbia after 1788 and the accelerated development of the *ciftlik* system.

A part of the general decomposition and crisis through which the Ottoman empire passed in the nineteenth century, the *ciftlik* system stemmed from a variety of causes: the military failures of the empire in the preceding centuries reduced the opportunity for spoils and plunder, and the loss of territory suffered by the empire caused many spahija to be ejected from their estates into Serbia and the surrounding provinces where they seized the lands of the resident spahija<sup>45</sup>. A further complication was the large number of scions of spahija families without fiefs. In addition, the transformation of the Balkan economy from a natural to a market economy producing cereals and maize,

44. Djurdjev, *Historija naroda Jugoslavije*, II, p. 92.

45. On the *ciftlik* system see Branislav Nedeljkovic, *Istorija bastinske svojine*, pp. 122-133; Vuco, *Privredna Istorija Srbije*, pp. 152-156. See also Traian Stoianovich, "Factors in the Decline of Ottoman Society in the Balkans", *Slavic Review*, December 1962, Vol. XXI, No. 4, p. 628 f. The best recent work on the *ciftlik* system analyzing it from both the political and socioeconomic viewpoints is Traian Stoianovich, "Land Tenure and Related Sectors of the Balkan Economy 1600-1800", *Journal of Economic History*, XIII, Fall, 1953, 398-411. Additionally H. Inalcik, "Land Problems in Turkish History", *Muslim World*, XLV (July, 1955), 221-228.

created large latifundia with an oppressed and semi-enslaved peasant labor force hence the period is often called "the second serfdom". Finally, the Ottoman policy of periodically expelling from Constantinople into the provinces, the criminal elements, malcontents, drifters, and other social flotsam which either hired out as mercenaries for the private armies of the large landowners or powerful officials like the renegade pasha of Vidin, Pasvan Oglu. Many turned to banditry, pillaging and attacks on Moslems and Christians alike. Thus, the landless spahija unemployed janissaries and bandit groups (*krjalis*) simply seized the lands of other spahija for themselves or for a large landowner and drove them off or settled on the land as a second landowner or *ciftlik-sahibije*. The peasants were forced by terror and threats to sign over their lands to the *ciftlik-sahibije* in exchange for his protection and in effect became semi-enslaved, landless workers. In consequence, a conflict erupted between the eroding Ottoman estate society and a nascent Serbian state induced by socio-economic capitalist determinants within the chrysalis of a still dynamic and powerful patriarchal culture inherited from the past.

In the eighteenth century a skeletal Serbian state gradually emerged simultaneous with the development of new social strata. A hierarchy of local officials arose from the developing class of wealthy peasants, livestock dealers, merchants, former hajduks and mercenaries in the Austrian army. Oberknezovi elected by the Christian *raya* and recognized by the Ottoman administrators acted as intermediaries between the imperial administration and the *raya*. The origin of these Oberknezovi is still in dispute, but they probably originated either from the Austrian occupation era, or possibly were modelled on Austrian practices in effect in the Vojvodina and Slavonia where the Serb settlers were administered with a considerable amount of local autonomy<sup>46</sup>. Unlike the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries knez and Oberknez, they did not possess spahija estates and according to Vuk Karadzic, chronicler of the period, "did not differ markedly in [their] social life from any other peasant"<sup>47</sup>. In fact the position of Oberknez was highly prestigious and obviously connected with the new affluent social class in the villages. The major function of the Oberknez was to transfer to the pasha the taxes which had been levied on the knezine and then among the villages. Lower in rank was the *seoski*

46. According to Dragoslav M. Pavlovic the *Ober-knezes* appeared during the period of the Austrian occupation of Belgrade Pashalik for the first time. See Dragoslav M. Pavlovic, *Administrativna i crkvene politik Austrijska, (1718-39)* (Administrative and Church Policy of Austria, 1718-39), No. 62 (1901), p. 124.

47. Vuk Karadzic, *Prvi i drugi srpski ustanak* (The First and Second Serbian Revolt) (Belgrade, 1947), p. 42.

knez (village head) who carried out specific tasks such as tax gathering functions and whose authority ceased with the completion of his prescribed duties. The kmet, a traditional South Slavic functionary, was a kind of village elder or sheriff who settled quarrels, ejected undesirables, interceded for peasants in difficulty with the sultan's administration or their spahija landlord and, in general, preserved order in the village.

Village assemblies, usually held beneath the open sky, elected the lesser officials, while district assemblies elected the Ober-knezovi, (an appointed functionary during the Austrian administration of Serbia). Enjoying greater significance and prestige, the district assemblies were attended by ecclesiastical dignitaries, village chiefs, and other petty officials. Frequently the pasha issued decrees at these assemblies to give them an official character. Contact between the Ottoman administration and the raya, being limited, village and district assemblies made the important decisions of peasant life.

The introduction into the Balkans of the ciftlik system released forces that disturbed the orderly development of Serbian society and disrupted the system of self-government enjoyed by the raya as marauding janissaries seized and forcefully settled upon the lands of the spahijas and peasants. The janissaries penetrated the villages for the first time, erecting blockhouses and disrupting the traditional system of local self-government. Janissary detachments roamed the countryside extorting, pillaging and raping, forcing many to flee to the safety of the forests or across the Danube to Austria<sup>48</sup>.

The reformist sultan, Selim III (1789-1808), and his enlightened appointee, Hadji-Mustafa, pasha of Belgrade, repaired the disorder through the firman of 1793 which reconfirmed the Serbs in their former autonomous privileges, broadened the tax gathering privilege, abolished the ciftlik system, and with the aid of the armed raya expelled the janissaries<sup>49</sup>. Aided by Pasvan Oglu, renegade pasha of Vidin, the janissaries again seized Belgrade, restored the ciftlik system, abrogated the firman of 1793 and created new disorders. The spreading anarchy threatened the growing bourgeois class of livestock traders and affluent peasants which had benefited by the rise in commerce during the Austrian occupation and the period after the return of Belgrade to Otto-

48. For a discussion of these events by an eyewitness see Edward Lovett (ed.), *The Memoirs of Protá Matija Nenadović* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 12 ff; see also Stojan Novaković, *Tursko carstvo pred ustanak (1780-1804)* (The Turkish Empire Before the Serbian Uprising, 1780-1804), (Belgrade, 1906), p. 137.

49. Dusan Pantelic, *Beogradski Pasaluk posle svistovskog mira, 1718-1794* (Belgrade Pashalik After the Svistov Peace, 1718-1794) (Belgrade, 1919), pp. 140-51.



man rule (1739-89), and forced it to unite in revolt with the oppressed peasantry<sup>50</sup>.

The First Revolt (1804-13), as the uprising against the janissary terror is known in Serbian history, was initially a desperate reflex action to return to the autonomous privileges of the firman of 1793 and the beau ideal of the Hadji Mustafa era. Later it expanded into a general revolt against Ottoman rule<sup>51</sup>. Subsumed by the main struggle against the Turks, several foci of centralist and anticentralist power appeared, generated by the internal conflict between Karadjordje, the major leader of the revolt, and the separatist impulses of the regional leaders. Against the wider centralist demands of Karadjordje, the local leaders posed their own narrow, somewhat feudal, regional ambitions and thus, paradoxically, were exponents of both the centralist and anticentralist currents. Strong-willed and arbitrary, the vojvode, the powerful regional leaders enriched themselves by deflecting into their own pockets the feudal dues and taxes formerly collected by the spahija landlords and Ottoman state, as well as through extortions of grain, livestock and kuluk (corvée) which often exceeded the worst excesses of Turkish rule. Later they swept aside the former local organs and extended their purely military authority over civil affairs in the regions under their control. Karadjordje's dynastic ambitions posed a grave threat to their personal ascendancy, and they tenaciously fought his efforts to extend his power beyond a position of *primus inter pares*<sup>52</sup>. They desired a state of petty princelings similar to pre-partition Poland.

50. Trade between Austria and Belgrade Pashalik expanded to about three million francs after the 1784 treaty between Austria and Turkey. Herman Wendel, *Der Kampf der Südslawen um Freiheit und Einheit* (Frankfurt a/M, 1927), p. 87. The previously insignificant livestock trade, particularly hogs, grew considerably during the eighteenth century. See Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Merchant", p. 282.

51. At first the Porte regarded the insurgent *raya* as loyal subjects upholding the Sultan against the illegal usurpation of his authority and ordered the Pashas of Bosnia and Nis to aid them against the janissaries. The Grand Vizier, Reis-Effendi, even defended the uprising to representatives of the Great Powers. See Miroslav Djordjevic, *Politička istorija Srbije (1804-1813)* (The Political History of Serbia, 1804-1813) (Belgrade, 1956), p. 68f; also Grgur Jaksic, *Evropa i vaskurs Srbije* (Europe and the Rise of Serbia) (Belgrade, 1927), p. 32.

52. Slobodan Jovanovic describes the vojvodas as "the self-styled leaders of the revolt who had destroyed the narrow framework of the autonomous districts (knezina) taking under their control entire regions which had revolted. Thus, they created above the autonomous units of the earlier period a military command of a wider sphere". Slobodan Jovanovic, *Karadjordje i njegove vojvode* (Karadjordje and his Vojvodas) (Belgrade, 1938), p. 15. Some of the "Great Vojvodas" such as Jacob Nenadovic were almost as powerful as Kara-

The contest between Karadjordje and the vojvodas erupted first in the Praviteljstvujusci Sovet (Governing Council), a collegial body, suggested by the Russians, of twelve vojvodas presided over by Karadjordje<sup>53</sup>. As both sides ignored that body, it declined to a quasi-administrative organ. The political struggle continued in the Vojvoda Assembly, a more prestigious body attended by the vojvode accompanied by hundreds of their armed followers (momci) where occasional gun play occurred and Karadjordje had difficulty in enforcing his will. As the revolt progressed, and the Serbs failed through negotiations to gain autonomy under a native prince, their goal became an independent Serbian state guaranteed by the Great Powers. They offered, therefore, to place Serbia under Austrian or Russian protection. Similar suggestions were made to the French<sup>54</sup>. The internal struggle affected the interests of the Russians. Exploiting the revolt to draw off Turkish forces facing their own troops, the Russians manipulated the desperate Serbs by dangling promises of independence before them.

Russian influence in Serbia mounted with the arrival of K.K. Rodofinikin, a Greek in the czar's service, who quickly perceived that Karadjordje's dynastic aspirations did not correspond to Russian interests and recommended his replacement by a more tractable senate composed of his vojvode rivals<sup>55</sup>. The first Russian attempt to circumscribe Karadjordje's power through the ill-fated Rodofinikin Constitution of 1807 providing for a senate presided over by a prince-president limited to three votes failed when Czar Alexander I vetoed the scheme<sup>56</sup>. The feud between Karadjordje and the vojvoda con-

djordje. At the height of his success after the capture of Sabac by his forces, Jacob signed his decrees "Vojvoda of Valjevo, Uzica and Sabac". Karadzic, *Prvi i drugi ustanak*, pp. 142-45.

53. See Dragoslav Jankovic, *Praviteljstvujusci Sovet* (The Governing Council) (Belgrade, 1952), 1-2.

54. Karadjordje's relations with the French and Austrians are covered in *ibid.*, pp. 1-77. On June 28, 1807 Karadjordje and Marquis Paulucci, a Russian emissary to the Serbs, signed a thirteen point convention at Negotin requesting the Russian Czar to take Serbia under his protection, grant a constitution and appoint a governor who would restore order in the country. Jasa Prodanovic, *Ustavne borbe u Srbiji* (The Constitutional Struggle in Serbia) (Belgrade, 1939), p. 13.

55. For Rodofinikin's suggestions that Karadjordje be lured to Russian headquarters and detained there and that the sons of Karadjordje and the leading vojvoda be held hostage under pretext of sending them to school in Russia see Djordjevic, *Politička istorije Srbije*, p. 235.

56. For the text of the Rodofinikin Constitution Prodanovic, *Ustavne borbe u Srbiji*, p. 13f. Novakovic writes that Alexander rejected the project "because he did not wish to mix into the affairs of the people across the Danube". Stojan Novakovic, *Ustavno pitanje i zakoni Karadjordjeva vremena (1805-1811)* (The Constitutional Question and the Laws

gealed the following year into the Constitution of November 1808 which established a twelve-member collegial government, one from each region (nahija) in Belgrade Pashalik, with Karadjordje as Supreme Leader of Serbia with hereditary rights in his male descendants. Some like Stojan Novakovic interpret the 1808 constitution as a victory for Karadjordje and the centralist position, while others consider it a victory for vojvoda separatism. Its principal merit was the proclamation, at least on paper and in agreement with Russia, of a limited hereditary monarchy in Serbia<sup>57</sup>. Behind the scenes, Rodofinikin pulled the strings, but when Russian aid to the Serbs failed to arrive, his relations with Karadjordje became strained and he hastily departed in May 1809<sup>58</sup>. With the aid of a new, strongly centralist constitution issued in 1811, Karadjordje consolidated his position before the collapse of the First Revolt<sup>59</sup>.

After the flight of Karadjordje and the subsidence of the Turkish terror, the Ottoman government appointed Milos Obrenovic, one of the lesser vojvode to be the ober-knez of three districts and expanded the Firman of 1793: taxes were to be gathered by a Serbian supreme prince and turned over to the pasha; special courts for the raya, and mixed courts in cases involving a Christian and Moslem, were established. By manipulating the tax gathering privilege, Milos, as supreme prince after 1815, secured control of all income sources in the Pashalik<sup>60</sup>. Leasing rights on state property (muhade), water transportation (skele), and customs duties (djumruk) increased his wealth and power. The vagaries of the Ottoman financial system, the Ottoman habit of delaying salary payments, and the chronic indebtedness of the pasha forced Ottoman officials to turn to Milos who distributed his largesse with a broad hand, enabling him to extend his influence into the pasha's entourage<sup>61</sup>.

of Karadjordje's Time, 1805-1811) (Belgrade, 1907), p. 146. However, in his instructions to Paulucci, the Czar told him "to inform those people with whom you come into contact that the Imperial court will neglect nothing to aid the Serbs if only we are convinced they will do as we desire". Djordjevic, *Politička istorija Srbije*, p. 173.

57. For the text of the November 1808 Constitution see Novakovic, *Ustavno pitanje i zakoni Karadjordjeva vremena*, p. 26f, and Lazar Arsenijevic-Batalaka, *Istorija srpskog ustanka* (Belgrade, 1898), p. 472f.

58. Until the eve of his flight, Rodofinikin was "à la tête de l'administration: He was the real president of the Council who convoked and directed its sessions". Dragoslav Jankovic, *O političkim strankama u Srbiji u XIX veka* (Political Parties in Serbia in the Nineteenth Century) (Belgrade, 1951), p. 47.

59. For the text of the 1811 Constitution see Novakovic, *Ustavno pitanje i zakoni Karadjordjeva vremena*, pp. 87-96.

60. Guzina, *Knezina i postanak srpske buržoaske države*, p. 70.

61. On the degeneration of Ottoman rule in Serbia see Tihomir R. Djordjevic, *Srbija*

By appointing and making all local officials directly responsible to him, Milos gained control over the localities. A special body, the Inspektorat, maintained close surveillance over the vojvode. The Kancelarija, the highest executive organ in the pashalik after 1813, and the assembly of vojvode, stormy petrel of previous eras, degenerated to vestigial ceremonial units filled with Milos' appointees<sup>62</sup>. This accretion of power by Obrenovic which resulted in the loss of personal freedom, and provoked massive lawlessness and periodic peasant upheavals.

While brigandage had always been an endemic reflex to bad economic and social conditions throughout the Balkans, the tidal wave of banditry by the hajduks (estimated at one-third of the population during the second part of Milos' administration), involved entire villages and regions. The residual chaos and turmoil of the war years (1804-13), the oppression of Obrenovic's tax gatherers and officials, and the absorption by the state of the autonomous local organs which had formerly drained off social tensions, were translated into universal banditry. The ominous growth of state power clearly evoked a corollary rise in the level of social distress<sup>63</sup>.

Peasant revolts studded the first fifteen years of Milos' reign; in the period from 1815-39 there were only four years of uninterrupted peace. Massive disturbances like the Djak Revolt (1826) named for its leader Miloje Petrovic or Djak, a livestock dealer from Pozeska which erupted in central Serbia in the districts of Smederevo, Kragujevac and Pozarevac, threatened to plunge the entire country into anarchy. Rebel petitions to Belgrade complaining of the arrogance and cruelty of the state officials, rather than against Milos himself, leave little doubt that the principal cause of the uprising lay at the door of a growing and arbitrary state power and the abuse by officials

*pre sto godina* (Serbia One Hundred Years Ago) (Belgrade, 1946), pp. 182-197. On the subsuming of Ottoman power Guzina writes: "One receives the impression based upon the correspondence between Milos and the Kancelarije that the representative of the "sovereign" Turks in Serbia, i.e., the Pasha, was not able to make a single important decision in exercising his authority without previously consulting Milos Obrenovic, the "unappointed" Serbian central authority". Guzina, *Knezina i postanak srpske buržoaske države*, p. 154.

62. Nikic, *Lokalna uprava u Srbiji*, p. 56.

63. A recent study of pre-capitalist banditry notes: "Social banditry...is little more than endemic peasant protest against oppression and poverty...It becomes epidemic rather than endemic when a peasant society which knows of no better means of self-defense is in a condition of abnormal tension and disruption". Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester, 1959), p. 5. See also by the same author the selection on "Hajduks" in Eric Hobsbawm *Bandits* (1969), pp. 61-71.

of public office as a sanction to oppress<sup>64</sup>. The Djak uprising which Austria played a role in provoking, also expressed the upper social strata's demand for shared power and legal safeguards of life and property<sup>65</sup>. Only by promising to issue a constitution was Milos able to avert being driven from the country.

Regarding Serbia as his personal fief, Milos kept the state's revenues in private banks<sup>66</sup>. His ruinous economic centralism directly threatened the rising bourgeoisie which might normally have been allied to him. Particularly nettlesome to the latter was his policy of forbidding trade without permits which he granted only to relatives and friends. Consummed by peasant avarice, he converted Serbia into a vast personal trading monopoly, siphoning profits into his own pockets and undermining the personal ambition of the new Spahija stratum of landowners, merchants and state officials in their attempt to emulate the Rumanian boyar class. Rejecting their demands to parcel out land and create a new aristocracy, he provoked this powerful arriviste class into open rebellion<sup>67</sup>. Physical punishment, often administered personally by Milos to high officials, frequent demotions, and dismissals without pen-

64. For the rebel petitions see M. Djordjevic, *Djakova Buna* (Djak's Revolt) (Belgrade, 1953), 122 ff. Hobsbawm observes that the rebels are always revolting against unsatisfactory social conditions, never against the ruler who remains *sacrosanct*. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p. 22. On Milos Obrenovic's ruthlessness Guzina comments: "Given the internal circumstances of the times and conditions within the country, it was of the utmost necessity that it (Serbia) possess a ruler into whose hands would be concentrated the entire power and not princes who wished to split it into districts inherited from the Turkish era where they could rule independently of one another...Though he did not have the interests of the Serbian people, Milos Obrenovic secured for Serbia exactly what it needed at that moment for its national interests". Guzina, *Knezina i postanak srpske buržoaske države*, pp. 219-220. A proposal to divide Serbia among the four leading vojvoda even before expelling the Turks was rejected by Milos with the admonition: "Don't build the spit while the hare is still running in the forest". Leopold Ranke, *The History of the Serbia and Serbian Revolution* (London, 1853), 214.

65. Djordevic, *Djakova Buna*, pp. 1-5. Additionally, according to S. Fisher-Galati, Toma Vucic, the anti-Habsburg agitator and Avram Petronijevic, Stefan Radicevic and Isvetko Rajovic were all in Austrian pay. "In Serbia the Austrians were the primary foreign supporters of internal disorder and revolutionary agitation". S. Fischer-Galati, "The Habsburg Monarchy and Balkan Revolution", *Austrian History Yearbook*, II, 1966, pp. 8-9 n 19, 22, citing French and Austrian Foreign Offices archival sources.

66. Leften Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York, 1958), p. 262.

67. For Milos' attitude on the creation of a Serbian aristocracy see Jankovic, *O političkim strankami u Srbiji u XIX*, pp. 62-63. For Milos' hostility as expressed to Vuk Karadzic see Jasa Prodanovic, *Nasi i strani* (Ours and Others) (Belgrade, 1967), pp. 85f.

sions, kept state officials in constant trepidation. After Serbia attained autonomy in 1830, Milos' capricious rule became intolerable, and Vuk Karadzic, the country's outstanding man of letters in the nineteenth century, openly rebuked him for maltreating his subjects whom he disdainfully called "cattle without tails" and urged him to grant a constitution<sup>68</sup>.

To contain the widespread brigandage and social discontent, and to prevent the country from falling to a primitive level of existence, Milos divided the state administration into five large *serdarstva* (an administrative region), each headed by a *serdar* one of whom was his brother Jevrem with complete civil and military authority<sup>69</sup>. Adopting even more draconic measures after the upheaval of 1835, he placed the entire country under virtual martial law, dividing it into four military regions presided over by a military commander with civil jurisdiction<sup>70</sup>. Captured bandits were hanged on the spot, and their accomplices were deprived of a limb, maimed or tortured.

Milos' efforts to consolidate his power were thwarted by the Russians who utilized the proven tactic of *divide et impera*. In 1820 they offered to recognize him as prince of Serbia on condition that he would govern with a senate of permanent members. To forestall the emergence of a strong central authority in Serbia that would pursue an independent Serbian national policy, Russia and at times Turkey and Austria supported the anti-centralist internal opposition throughout most of the nineteenth century<sup>71</sup>. The Russians supported the *vojvoda* opposition against Karadjordje, the constitutionalist party (*Ustavobranitelji*) against Milos, his son Michael and Prince Alexander during the first half of the century, and the Radicals against Prince Milan in the 1880's and 1890's. The sole exceptions occurred during the second reign of Michael Obrenovic in the 1860's and during the war with Turkey (1876-78) when Russia supported the national struggle.

68. Vuk Karadzic, *O unutrašnjoj politici kneza Milosa* (On the Internal Policy of Prince Milos) (Belgrade, 1923). For relations between Milos and Vuk and the background to his denunciation of Milos' policy see Prodanovic, "Vuk Karadzic and Milos Obrenovic", in *Nasi i strani*, pp. 44-108.

69. Nikic, *Lokalna uprava u Srbiji u XIX i XX veka*, p. 60.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

71. Thus, Garasanin, Serbian Minister of Internal Affairs, after having been removed under Russian pressure, commented bitterly on Russian intervention in Serbia's affairs: "I do not eat my bread with Russian teeth, nor do I exist for the pleasure of Russia...they want me to become a slave and servant...but this I will not be". St. Lovcevic (ed.), *Pisma Ilije Garašanina Jovan Marinovicu, 1849-1874* (Letters of Ilija Garasanin to Jovan Marinovic, 1849-1874) (Belgrade, 1931), I, p. 230. For a similar complaint by General Knicanin,

After the massive revolt of 1834 led by one of Milos' own serdars, the Russians supported the opposition's demands for a constitution and a senate of permanent members. The first attempt at constitution-making, the ill-conceived 1835 constitution, proved too revolutionary and had to be dropped<sup>72</sup>. Through their emissaries, Baron Ruckmann and Prince Dolgoruki, the Russians pressed instead for a senate appointed by the Porte. Prince Dolgoruki threatened to draw up the project himself and even presented Milos with a list of people to be appointed<sup>73</sup>. Milos relented after an ominous visit from Vaschenko, the Russian minister to Belgrade, and agreed to a senate<sup>74</sup>.

Entrenched behind the senate, the Constitutionalist party oligarchy, a thin strata of high officials, affluent merchants and livestock dealers, laid the foundations of modern Serbia. The Constitutionalist bureaucratic machine and the "Great Serbia" plan of Ilija Garasanin, the country's first important statesman formed the organizational and ideological basis of the Serbian bureaucratic state. The Constitutionalist Law of May 12, 1839, the mainstay of all the personal and authoritarian regimes for the next fifty years, empowered the central government to appoint all provincial and district officials, converting them into organs of state authority and extending the state's hand once again into the villages.

Milos Obrenovic had based his power on the small peasant proprietor whom he encouraged to settle on the lands of the former Turkish spahija expropriated after 1833. His political slogan "the land belongs to those who till it", won him support among the peasant masses and the thousands of new settlers who poured into Serbia to take advantage of his offer of free land. However, the penetration into Serbia since the eighteenth century of a money economy produced new and powerful social groups antagonistic to the older

leader of the Serbian forces in Hungary in 1848-49, to Prince Alexander see Grgur Jaksic, *Srbija od 1813 do 1858* (Serbia From 1813 to 1858) (Belgrade, n.d.), p. 144.

72. On the Constitution of 1835 see Emile Haumant, *La formation de la Yougoslavie* (Paris, 1935), p. 272 and Svetozar Markovic, *Srbija na istok* (Serbia in the East) (Zagreb, 1946), p. 84. See also Mihail Gavrilovic, "Suspendovanje prvog srpskog ustava (The Suspension of the First Serbian Constitution), *Iz nove srpskog istorije* (Belgrade, 1926), pp. 190-209.

73. To the objections of one of Milos' supporters against the Senate, the Russian minister to Constantinople replied: "You and the Prince will disappear before the Senate is destroyed". Prodanovic, *Ustavne borbe u Srbiji*, p. 82.

74. For a recent study of the Great Power struggle in Serbia during the late 1830's see Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Serbia 1837-39, The Mission of Colonel Hodges* (Paris, 1961).

patriarchal society and the system of local autonomy inherited from the past. Milos partially contributed to the growth of a centralized, bureaucratic state by replacing the democratically elected local officials with personal appointees whose salaries had to be paid by taxing the peasants. Thus, while revenues had generally exceeded expenses during Milos' and Michael Obrenovic's administrations except for the two years 1834 and 1835, Milos left behind 700,000 thalers when he left Serbia in 1838. Under Prince Alexander Karadjordjevic this changed and deficits became increasingly higher. Income increased by 54.9 percent while expenses grew by 69.3 percent; during the last ten years of the Karadjordjevic government income averaged 1,192,256 thalers while expenses rose to 1,233,733 thalers<sup>75</sup>.

Expansion of the state administration and its personnel accounted for the major part of the increase in expenditures. During the period from 1838 to 1842 the number of officials doubled from 563 to 1,151, of whom 286 were police<sup>76</sup>. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Serbia employed a bureaucratic apparatus appropriate to a state several times its size and, according to the Hungarian diplomatist and historian, Benjamin Kallay, it was the most highly centralized state in the world<sup>77</sup>. Thus the so-termed "five thaler" revolt of the peasantry was not only an indignant protest against raising the *glavnica*, the major tax source of revenue, from five to six thalers, which cost Michael Obrenovic his throne, but was also a protest against growing peasant indebtedness and the assault upon their patriarchal life-style<sup>78</sup>. Forced to sell more of what he produced to pay taxes, the peasant often fell into the clutches of speculators and usurers. The alarming rise in peasant indebtedness and foreclosures induced Milos to enact the Minimum Protected Homestead Law (*okucje*) which forbade foreclosure on a minimum allotment of land and livestock<sup>79</sup>.

From the foregoing we can see that Serbian localism from the earliest times to the 19th century with its panoply of institutions and officials constituted a powerful countervailing force against all centralizing tendencies

75. Slobodan Jovanovic, *Ustavobranitelji i njihova vlada* (The Constitutionals and Their Administration) (Belgrade, 1925,) pp. 93-97.

76. Jankovic, *O političkim strankama u Srbiji u XIX veka*, p. 908.

77. Haumat, *La Formation de la Yougoslavie*, p. 312.

78. For details see Dragoslav Stranjakovic, *Vučičeva buna* (Vučić's Revolt) (Belgrade, 1936), pp. 46, 51.

79. On the Minimum Protected Homestead see Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, 1954), pp. 42 ff.



whether in the form of Serbian Medieval, Ottoman Turkish or the early nineteenth century Serbian dynasties. It was against the conflict of these two tendencies that the socioeconomic and political history of Serbia was played out. Sometimes the two tendencies successfully merged and in given historical epochs and at other times they were antagonistic, but they always were important currents shaping historical events.