ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΠΟΔΙΣΤΡΙΑΚΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ

**Σχολή Οικονομικών & Πολιτικών Επιστημών
Τμήμα Πολιτικής Επιστήμης και Δημόσιας Διοίκησης**

**Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών
Σπουδές Νοτιοανατολικής Ευρώπης: Πολιτική, Ιστορία, Οικονομία**

Διπλωματική Εργασία

Equality and the Dismantling of the Ottoman Paradigm: A View from Late 19th-Century Constantinople

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ΑΘΗΝΑ, Σεπτέμβριος 2021

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

EST. 1837

Master's Programme in Southeast European Studies
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Abstract

The present study focuses on the Late Ottoman Era, more specifically on the period known as the *Tanzimat* (1839-1876), when Ottoman state officials and elites embarked upon a Western-inpired series of reforms that aimed to avert the dismemberment of the by then crumbling Empire. At that time, the centuries-old *millet* system, which prescribed the rights of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects in accordance with the injunctions of the Islamic law, underwent significant modifications aiming to transform the Empire into a modern polity by establishing Western-incubated institutions and norms. In this line, the tolerant paradigm of the *millet* was superseded by one in which the dominant principle was that of egalitarianism, reshaping thus the dynamics that hitherto dictated intercommunal relations within the imperial frame. The bourgeois members of the Greek Orthodox (Rum) community of Constantinople perceived favorably the new realities that the programmatic reforms sought to engender, as the testimony of *Neologos*, its contemporary mouthpiece newspaper, from the papers of which I gleaned data for my research, reveals. I argue that for them, the Tanzimat spawned an opportunity to put forward their demands for secularization, and amidst such an auspicious occasion for Ottoman non-Muslims, renegotiate their status within the Empire's remoulding socio-political realm.

Keywords

Foreword

I take the present work to be a rather timid, though for me overwhelmingly fascinating, endeavor to engage with academic fields of study that I nowadays often wish to have discovered much earlier in the course of my student years. For those aroused intellectual interests, I am mostly indebted to the Professors I had the chance to be taught by during the last two years at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. A great share has to be accredited to the intellectually stimulating teachings of Dr. Ioannis Kyriakantonakis, whom I should also thank for accepting to supervise the writing process of this thesis. His extensive and detailed remarks, exhortations, guidance and responsiveness, had been decisive in caring through with the task undertaken assiduously, within a well-organized timeframe. Finally, I should thank my parents who, even though they had not been particularly keen on my intellectual meanderings and vocational interests—I reckon this was due to the precariousness of our times—did not cease to financially support my efforts.

September 2021,
Athens

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Introduction

In 2009 the British School at Athens came up with an interesting and, admittedly, thought-provoking with regards to the germination and gradual development of certain scholarly fields (see, for instance, in respect to social anthropology, Hirschon, 2009) and research interests in the late 19th and early 20th-century fledgling Greek state, edition of compiled and further reviewed texts that had earlier been presented at a conference held in Athens. Written *for*, but also *by*, several acclaimed scholars who have prodigiously, and equally incisively, contributed to the 'unearthing,' both literal and metaphorical, of ancient and modern Greek culture, *Scholars, Travels, Archives: Greek History and Culture Through the British School at Athens* offered a glimpse to 'a kind of microcosm of colonial life' (Beaton, 2009: 217) whose impact nonetheless—judging in hindsight—had been rather disproportionately far-reaching in relation to the minuscule size of its milieu.

Among the wide variety of subjects touched upon, there had been two texts—that of Paschalis Kitromilides (2009) and the one of David Shankland (2009)—that introduced me to the groundbreaking work of a rather quirky figure, namely Frederick Willian Hasluck (1878-1920), that sparked my interest and, in turn, prompted me to occupy myself with the subject unfolded in the present thesis. Hasluck's passage from the School had been a tumultuous one due to a series of untoward junctures, as Shankland's (2009: 91-3) essay reveals. During his stay in Greece he traveled extensively not only across the mainland but also to the islands—and far beyond, to Asia Minor and Albania (ibid.: 94). His theoretical position, moulded out of those roamings, remains hardly classifiable, glossing over the disciplinary fields of modern-day anthropology and archaeology, 'anticipat[ing] the insight of both while fully resembl[ing] neither' (ibid.: 99), and despite its inchoateness—corollary of Hasluck's premature death—is celebrated as a pioneering one. What sets Hasluck apart from his contemporaries, according to Shankland (ibid.: 94), is the profound interest he maintained in 'the interstices between cultures'; that idiosyncratic outlook he adopted, inspired him, instead of giving precedence to a particular paradigm, to broaden his focus on a plethora of cultural, religious and confessional traditions—thus to distance himself from 'grand narratives'—and alternatively give weight to their encounters, interplays, sharings, as well as divergent trappings (ibid.). It has been such eclecticism that, along with a bona fide fascination with micro-histories and the intricate dynamics met at the grassroots level of a society, motivated me to conceive, further conceptualize, and pursue the present study.

Kitromilides (2009), respectively, discusses Hasluck's magnum opus, i.e.

Christianity and Islam under the Sultans. For him (ibid.: 103-4), the distinguishing feature that sets apart, in historiographical terms, Hasluck's work from those of his contemporaries, lies in his diligent endeavour to recover images of pre-modern societies, and bring into relief the widespread pluralism, instantiating in the presence within them of multiple culturally diverse communities, which pervaded them—that pluralism that was put into jeopardy, and eventually withered away, by the militant agenda of nationalism and the attendant imperatives of the nation-state, as those were enunciated and subsequently consolidated following the end of the First World War and the consequent creation of highly homogeneous nation-states in the region. In such societies there had been two 'facts of life'—both permeating Hasluck's work, and of which he draws a vibrant image—that were, and most likely still are, 'totally intolerable to nationalism,' i.e. religious syncretism, and identities—whether religious or ethnic—of a fluid nature (ibid.). In respect of the former, Hasluck engages with the record and study of tangible traces in monuments of faith and places of worship, as well as of instances of symbiosis, religious sharings and social pluralism encountered across settlements dotted around the southern Balkans and Asia Minor during the Late Ottoman era; the study of identities, in turn, brings to fore the teleology that nationalism dictates—and thus imposes on processes of identity formation—by 'understand[ing] forms of pre-modern ethnic consciousness as just preparatory stages in a foreordained course of development leading up to national plenitude' (ibid.). In effect, it is the irreconcilability of the two—namely the tenets of nationalism and the conventions of the pre-modern world that the latter is set to engulf—that chokes off the leeway for eclectic and disparate collective identities to emerge and flourish. Quite illustrative in this sense, I deem the testimony of a Protestant missionary, Benjamin Barker, who held office as representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Smyrna; while touring Thrace in 1823, he noted the following:

> 'What greatly struck me was to see with that freedom the Christians and Jews enter the mosque at Adrianople without meeting the least opposition, [...]; [...] Mr. Vasilaki tells me that it is a curious sight to see the Greeks with their small lighted candles, praying and crossing themselves on one side of the mosque and the Turks with their accustomed prostrations on the other. [...] *Since the* [Greek] *revolution* [of 1821] *the Greeks have not dared to avail themselves of such an ancient custom and probably this extraordinary privilege will henceforward be entirely dropped* [emphasis added]' (quoted in Clogg, 1996: 253-4).

'Intolerance, as a sentiment of collective prejudice,' argues Michael Ignatieff (1999: 103) while unfolding his analysis of the multifaceted relationship between toleration

and nationalism, 'has to struggle against, and eventually deny, more elementary patterns of human recognition and fellowship which function at the individual level [or at a subgroup/local level, with respect to the aforementioned illustration]. This would suggest that intolerance is a form of divided consciousness, in which abstract, conceptual ideological hatred vanquishes concrete, real and individual moments of identification.' Indeed, as regards the case of the Ottomans, it is nationalism, a phenomenon that for almost a century kept confounding Ottoman state functionaries—according to İlber Ortayli (1999: 165; see also Adanir, 2005: 404-5), designations such as '*eşkiya*,' i.e. *brigands*, and '*eterya*,' i.e. *committees*, appear in contemporary sources when referring to nationalist movements and their respective causes, betraying a rather meager understanding of the political motives spurring the action of such groups—that should be held accountable in the first place for the effacement of such intricate symbiotic schemes, since its grafting on the Empire tilted centuries-old balances, precipitating in turn its eventual downfall.

My intention, however, is not to focus on nationalism per se; rather, establishing as a central axis of my work what Roderic Davison (1977: 39-46) typologized as the 'seven Ottoman responses to nationalism,' i.e. the means, strategic moves and targeted policies that the Ottoman state employed to avert the carving out of independent statehood from its territories, my approach seeks to delve deeper into events of the 19th century, at a time when, to quote Quataert (1997: 421), '[t]he state was mired between legitimacies. Long-standing religious distinctions were embroiled in emerging class differentiations that clashed with immature notions of a common subjecthood/citizenry. The Ottoman Empire had no face.' I set out, more specifically, by tapping into contemporary sources, to trace the shifting attitudes of certain actors emerging as modernity—and along with it novel socio-political concepts—percolated out of Western European lands following the epoch-making event of the French Revolution (Kitromilides, 2000). 'At a time when the latter seemed dead in the land of its birth,' argues Bernard Lewis (1953: 125), 'its influence stifled in Turkey [*sic.*]. But the cutting from the tree of liberty had struck root in the soil of Islam. It was to bear both sweet and bitter fruit.' It is those 'fruits,' and—most importantly—how they were tasted on the ground, that will concern me here.

At the core of my study lies the following research question: How was the reconfiguration—even if partly just nominal, as I demonstrate further down—of the Ottoman *millet* system—with its historiographically propounded 'toleration'—in the 19th-century perceived by Constantinopolitan Greeks, members of the Greek Orthodox *millet*? My work is structured as follows: I start by dissecting and historicizing 'toleration,' a term that, to borrow Ifversen's (2011: 73) expression,

'carries a great deal of conceptual baggage.' Toleration—in its religious sense—is then discussed as a (non)policy applied to various extents and degrees by empires throughout global history; a nuanced account of concrete examples is also provided. Later on I visit the Ottoman paradigm; given that '[i]n the Ottoman context the radical affirmation of difference entailed acceptance and toleration but also discrimination' (Rodrigue, 1996: 86), I delineate the wider frame that dictated and regulated socio-political relations within the Ottoman polity by tracing the origins and identifying the constituents of the so-called *millet* system, and along with them the aspects of life of non-Muslims that the latter's functions impinged upon. I then elaborate on what is implied by 'reconfiguration' by drawing a image of the fermentations that marked the so-called 'Tanzimat' era (Period of Reforms); central focus is given on the reactions that the inaugurated reforms elicited by various agents of the different *millet*s, in particular with regard to the question of equality since—as I shall argue—the infiltration of such a principle in a society in which the '[dominant] example [did] not represent the liberal notions of complete equality and representation, but instead [...] committed efforts to find a common ground among groups of different religious and cultural background' (Barkey, 2014b: 476), essentially entailed a radical paradigm shift. At last, I build and put forward my argumentation by delving into the contemporary Constantinopolitan press published by exponents of the Greek Orthodox community. My aim is to map the developing dominant attitudes towards that paradigm shift.

Toleration

Toleration is an invariably kaleidoscopic concept. Its manifold permutations have always been chronotopically-dependent—to use the adverbial form of a term coined by the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in order to highlight the intrinsic connectedness and intertwining nature of the coordinates of time and space, drawing a spatio-temporal whole, a 'setting,' a context in plain conventional terms (Baldick, 2001: 40; for the suggested analytical distinctions between 'chronotope' and 'context,' see Blommaert & De Fina, 2017). 'There are no principles that govern all the regimes of toleration or that require us to act in all circumstances, in all times and places, on behalf of a particular set of political or constitutional arrangements,' remarks Michael Walzer (1997: 2-3). Toleration is a behavioral and normative condition which may apply to religious, cultural or other matters and practices; it may manifest itself through, or simply underpin, eclectic socio-political and/or socio-cultural arrangements, involve multifarious stakeholders and agents, and be employed strategically to pursue disparate objectives. In broad, rough terms though, toleration is understood as, and respectively in my work I take it to be, 'the willing putting up with the beliefs, actions and practices of others, by a person or group that disapproves of them and who would otherwise be inclined to prohibit or suppress them, if they had the power to do so. [It] is in this sense a deliberate exercise of self-restraint, a willed refusal to interfere coercively with what is regarded as the objectionable behaviour of others. It is an attitude and practice of restraint, typically distinguished from approval, indifference or mere acquiescence' (Horton, 2011: 290; for a rigorous conceptual analysis, see Cohen, 2004). Its distinctive and core value lies, according to Horton (2020: 191), 'in the space it affords individuals or groups—including the state—to allow others to follow ways of life or engage in practices honestly believed to be wrong, while mostly continuing to adhere to their own convictions'; all in all, I take toleration to comprise not 'a matter of private judgement but a contested feature of public policy whose indulgences extend liberty' (Katznelson, 2014: 41) since it is the 'practice and commitment to [it] among people and groups [that] enables an abstract understanding of oneself as a political person to emerge'—a notion comprising the kernel of liberal politics (Creppell, 2010: 37); the disputes therefore touching upon toleration shall be addressed—and respectively studied—as 'disputes about ends and not merely about means' (Mendus, 1988: 19).

As is the case with all such concepts, toleration can be warranted from within ideational, normative, moral or pragmatic grounds. 'As a site of applied ethics combining normative and practical elements,' argues Ira Katznelson (2014: 40; see

also Barkey, 2014a: 206-7), 'toleration hovers in an uncertain zone between, though often overlapping with, respect and recognition, on the one side, and persecution and oppression, on the other.' Arguing against the application of a regime of universal tolerance that in effect would 'dig its own grave,' Königs (2021: 12-4) distinguishes between a 'merely technical' concept of toleration and toleration as a 'moral ideal or virtue,' the distinguishing feature of the two being that in the latter's instance a need to maintain a *scope*—in order to prevent the triggering of relativistic impulses—is implied. In the literature, it is worth mentioning, the terms 'tolerance' and 'toleration' are frequently used interchangeably. Scholars such as Walzer (1997: xi), Barkey (2018: 82-3) and Cohen (2004: 76-8) though spell out a semantic distinction between the two: 'Tolerance' is taken to denote an *attitude*—namely a favorable disposition towards cultural pluralism and its celebrated values—that acknowledges, and in turn endorses, each group's special place within, and contribution to, a polity. 'Toleration,' on the other hand, refers to a certain *practice*—'a set of institutional arrangements that can serve to demarcate official policies and relationships across group lines,' to put it in Katznelson's (2014: 49) terms.

Toleration, I shall also argue, is one of those concepts that justify Quentin Skinner's (2018: 10-11) frank scepticism towards the 'project of writing histories of concepts' since a diachronic, unequivocal consensus on the semantic implications of the term is hardly traceable. Juxtaposing the Skinnerian approach, Reinhart Koselleck—the leading proponent of the field of conceptual history—included toleration (*Toleranz*) in his monumental lexicon, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, as one of the one—hundred—twenty—two concepts that fall into what he calls *Sattelzeit*, i.e. a threshold period during which the past was gradually transformed into the present, and alongside that shift many concepts came to be applied to domains beyond those to which they had been restricted in the past (Koselleck, 2011: 9-10). In the Introduction and Prefaces of the said work, Koselleck has argued (ibid.: 9) that 'concepts registering this change became 'Janus-faced': facing backwards, they pointed to social and political realities no longer intelligible to us without critical commentary; facing forward to our own time, concepts have taken on meanings that may not need further explanation to be directly intelligible to us. From this point on, we understand and conceptualize simultaneously.'

Accordingly, toleration—in its classical and Early Christian sense—focused on the life of the individual, and stood as the bearing of the difficulties afflicting and besetting humans at a personal level. In the stoic writings of Antiquity, the concept was used to refer to the bearing of anything burdensome to the human body or, more often, to the human mind, while during Early Christendom it came to allude to the

bearing of physical or psychological burdens, nevertheless having now acquired religious connotations; it denoted the 'virtuous capacity of Christian individuals to endure with calm the many sufferings of earthly existence,' being thus synonymous with 'patientia' (Bejczy, 1997: 368). The Middle Ages ushered in the development of 'tolerantia' into a social and political concept applied widely both in the ecclesiastical and secular spheres. The tolerating subject now evolved into a powerful collectivity tolerating certain groups of people whose alleged 'vices' were thought of as social burdens. Toleration thus came to imply 'the self restraint of political power, the abstinence from correctional or destructive force by the authorities governing society' (ibid.), the application of which sought to prevent the occurence of purported 'greater evils' than the ones tolerated. The main groups profited had been chiefly the Jews and the prostitutes—neither heretics nor homosexuals, who continued being ostracized in an inexorable fashion. The introduction, at last, in the 13th-century, of tolerantia into scholasticism considerably broadened its conceptual scope, expanding it from the domain of Church affairs to those of the state. Illustrative in this regard are the works of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) (Bejczy, 1997: 368-76). Bejczy (1997) is quite evangelical about the merits of that medieval conception of toleration: 'Tolerantia,' he contends, 'teaches us to live with real difference,' as it '[had been] a way of getting along with essential cultural differences between the Christian society and the outer world. The allegedly tolerant tendencies in the Renaissance thought, on the other hand, define only the relations within Christian civilization [...] as composed of relative, pluriform rules'; '[...] medieval tolerance coexisted with a uniform truth, whereas the effort of pluralizing religious truth in early modern times was accompanied by a decreasing willingness to tolerate social deviance' (ibid.: 383).

The early modern idea of toleration holds as its main point of reference the heavily strained religious relations of the Reformation/Counter-Reformation period. There had been the devastating implications of such fierce internecine strifes that 'projected toleration beyond considerations of heresy and the status of non-Christians' and elevated it 'from a concern with peripheral people by religious authorities and political rulers to a set of questions located at the very centre of European public and private life' (Katznelson, 2014: 42). Tuck (1988: 21-8) highlights the 16th-century debates sparked between moral and religious scepticists at the provinces of Holland as a watershed moment for the development of modern European political thought. Glossing over subsequent seminal works (ibid.: 28-34), he deduces that it would be rather a misjudgement to think of toleration as the 'child of doubt,' since 'none of the ideas about [it] that got initially conceptualized within a framework of intellectual scepticism towards traditional dogmas, present the issue as one of high principle';

rather '[...] there are not, and could not be, grounds for enforcing one's own beliefs upon another *simply because of the nature of those beliefs* [*sic.*]; but beliefs could be enforced upon unwilling subjects for pragmatic or political reasons' (ibid.: 35). Sheer pragmatism—to put it succinctly—along with considerations of civil peace and public order underpin, motivate and spawn tolerant acts and outlooks. It had been in this vein that the 'secular utilitarian' Thomas Hobbes posited toleration as a 'police matter' (Ryan, 1988: 57); as sole yardstick, according to him, of religious uniformity and suppression of heretical beliefs, ought to be employed the safeguarding of public order. John Locke, in turn, did propound a negative account of toleration (Waldron, 1988: 76), putting forward no argument fostering religious pluralism but stressing, in contrast, the putative irrationality of intolerance, hence of coercive persecution, due to (i) the involuntary nature of faith, and (ii) the fallibility of a civil magistrate's judgement, that, as a matter of fact, renders him ineligible to dictate a 'right' faith to his respective subjects (for a detailed analysis of the development of Locke's relevant epistemic arguments, see Van der Schaar, 2012: 45-63). Locke's argument is in effect 'an argument about agency rather than an argument about consequences' (Waldron, 1988: 85), in that it puts into question not the encroachment of the untolerated victim's freedom but rather the (un)tenability of the intolerant perpetrator's motives. What is implied then is that religiously-motivated coercion is unquestionably irrational (ibid.: 77). John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, cherished human diversity; his solemn concern for the individual and the discovery of truths prompted him to defend toleration on purely utilitarian grounds, taking the unfettered embracement of diversity, as an alternative to the coercive enforcement of an orthodoxy, to be 'the royal road to truth' (Edwards, 1988: 91). In Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideal community, at last, where persons would be treated as self-legislating beings worthy of respect, toleration is meant to form 'a matter of positive welcoming and prizing of human individuality' (Dent, 1988: 130).

Empires and Toleration

Notwithstanding the fact that the emergence of the contemporary notion of toleration in modern political thought is conventionally situated—as argued above—in the early modern era, as a principle of socio-political organization, an adopted institutional practice, and an applied policy nevertheless it harks back to much earlier times. Toleration's 'combination of disdain and the power to control with merely provisional decisions to self-restrict,' a tenor rendering it 'a soft glove covering a hard fist of power' (Katznelson, 2014: 44), does undoubtedly constitute a principal factor to which the domination and longevity of pre-modern and early modern empires should be plausibly attributed. It had been through well-regulated accommodationist policies and latitudinarian practices that involved a constant engagement in negotiation and compromise between authorities and communities, as well as a rearticulation of the former's own proclaimed universalism in pluralistic terms, that such 'puny leviathans' (Hall, 2012: 307-8) sought to set a lasting political equilibrium, legitimizing thereby their rule over motley populations, preserving social peace through refraining from persecution of the 'other,' and gradually expanding. That being the case, cultural, ethnic or religious diversity and toleration are still regarded as central 'imperial' trappings in contemporary accounts of historical empires (Foster, 2018: 450; Lachmann, 2018: 462). The relation between the two, moreover, is indeed one of interdependence since, although multiculturalism per se does not constitute a sine qua non for toleration, some form of diversity—so that divergent and contesting outlooks and perspectives can be engendered—is necessary; as Cohen (2004: 74) puts it: 'There must be some opposition. If there [is] no diversity, there [will] be nothing to oppose. If there [is] nothing to oppose, there [will] be nothing to tolerate.' In turn, '[it is] toleration,' in Walzer's (1997: xii) words, '[that] makes difference possible; [hence] difference makes toleration necessary,' since it is by virtue of the latter's formidable quality to 'impel real latitude for demographic, cultural, social and political heterogeneity, [opening thus] possibilities for wider and warmer forms of respect and recognition' (Katznelson, 2014: 45) that societies cohere and advance.

I should underscore though, in order to preempt potential misinterpretations, or rather quixotic and embellished illustrations of a 'tolerant' imperial social past (for a slightly skewed [in my own view, particularly when collated with the relevant literature that I considered for my study] illustration of the Ottoman paradigm, see, for instance, Karpat & Yildirim, 2010), that even though that type of imperial rule had been utterly successful in terms of serving as a social cauldron, incorporating a

plethora of cultural differences and establishing thereby a realm that made coexistence possible, it had never been a liberal, nor a democratic, way of governance. In spite of a wide variety of 'autonomies' conferred to distinct subject communities by the dominant 'incorporating regimes,' the latter never ceased to be autocratic. To add to that, such 'imperial autonomies' required individuals to suspend their own individuality since it had been *communities* that were exclusively addressed. Idiosyncratic identities therefore were neither welcome nor accommodated (Walzer, 1997: 15-6). Such a socio-political reading of the global history of empires is of course arbitrary, and definitely stepped into anachronism. Without ignoring the grave looming danger that it poses for a researcher, I shall try to take some of the blame off me by retrospectively quoting, after sightly paraphrasing, Arnold Toynbee (1939: 373, as quoted in Haddad, 1977: 9): 'For us, in our time and place, it [is] not within our power to start from anywhere else; for the [democratically-oriented] national community is the social prison-house in which our modern [...] souls are incarcerated.' Needless to say, such a precedent requires one to be methodologically vigilant, especially when engaging in the study of primary sources (on this matter, see the relevant remarks by Kitromilides, 2003: 28-9, as well as the example cited by Norton, 2015: 258-62).

With regard to religious toleration—the variant of toleration that is central to my study, given that I bring under scrutiny historical eras during which religion dominated every single aspect of human life, from social relations to politics, rights and consciousness—Sun and Zhao's (2019) comparative, classificatory analysis of several pre-modern empires is a highly descriptive one. Seeking to map the various policy patterns adopted with respect to different religions in the lifetime of empires, they, by examining (i) the kinds of religions sanctioned or banned by state authorities, (ii) the extent that equivalent discriminatory practices took place, and (iii) the frequency rate of forced conversions, distinguish five tiers, and, accordingly, categorize empires in descending order, taking as a yardstick their respective practices of religious toleration: At the top of the pyramid stand, as quintessential cases of religious toleration, the Achaemenid Empire during Cyrus' reign, the Parthian, and the Mongol Empires; all three of them tolerated, as well as patronized, a multitude of religions; they did not discriminate against any of them and did not attempt to impose their own faith on those under their vassalage. Next come the pre-Christian Roman Empire, and the Ming and Qing Empires in China; these differ from those of the first tier in that they displayed certain, apparent limits on their religious toleration. The Roman paradigm, for instance, prescribed that all the sub-political entities, such as tribes, which after their subjugation were to continue to exist under

Roman overlordship, were to be conferred the prerogative to preserve their observances, practices and cults; due to their incorporation though in the *civitas*, those had to be confined to a private sphere. It had been exclusively the observance of the public cult, i.e. the cult of the *civitas*, in which the Roman authorities maintained an interest as a hallmark of social stability; this, therefore, had to be observed by the whole citizenry. In a nutshell, in the religious affairs of pre-Christian Rome the private sphere was not to overlap with the public (Ando, 2018). For both Ming and Qing empires respectively, Confucianism formed the state ideology; nevertheless, Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and cults of local deities were all tolerated. Sectarian religions and movements often instigated by charismatic leaders who sought to propagate messianic injunctions were, on the other hand, regarded as potential matrices of social unrest and were thus suppressed.

The Sasanian Empire alone fills Sun and Zhao's (2019) third tier. Sassanids ordained Zoroastrian orthodoxy as the official religion within its territorial domains and embarked upon the persecution and obliteration of heresies, notably Manichaeism and Mazdakism. They tolerated however other religions whose proselytical teachings were not considered malevolent—within territorial margins though, and out of the empire's core areas, and rarely carried out conversions. Islamic empires follow. The latter had Islam established as state-religion and persecuted heresies and apostasy; monotheistic religions were allowed to exist, albeit being subject to numerous harsh restrictions and blatant discriminations. I shall discuss the case of Ottoman Islam further down; it should be highlighted moreover that in such empires a subject's religious identity impinged directly upon one's social standing, for Muslim members enjoyed a wide range of privileges. Those by themselves comprised powerful incentives for conversions to take place as it was only through such an avenue that one could ameliorate one's social status. Last, as least tolerant, come the Christian Empires, namely the Roman Empire after 380 AD, the Carolingian Dynasty, the Holy Roman, and the Byzantine Empires. Those had Christianity installed as the official, dominant state-religion; heretics and apostates suffered fierce persecutions; pagans were forced to convert. Only Judaism was tolerated, since the Jews were considered a living testimony to the authenticity of Scriptural events—though still under much more severe restrictions than they did in Islamic empires. Besides, the authors (ibid.: 250-5), elaborating on the conventional distinction between monotheistic and polytheistic religions, come to deduce that it is when 'zero-sum,' i.e. religions whose votaries consider their own convictions as the ultimate source of truth, intersect with 'evangelical' ones, i.e. religions characterized by a high zeal in imposing themselves on others, prevail as state ideologies that

religious toleration is significantly reduced.

To turn the focus on the two cardinal early modern empires whose territorial jurisdictions extended over Southeastern Europe, namely the Hapsburgs and the Ottomans, (in)tolerant policies of a different design, scope and volume, underpinned by disparate motives and concerns, and following distinct, rather divergent, trajectories, are encountered. Karen Barkey (2014a) highlights the incipient development of commercial relations across Europe along with the region's progressive incorporation in the networks of the emerging capitalist economy of the 18th-century, as the two main determinants which spurred 'tolerant' Ottomans to persecute, and even perpetrate genocide against, subject populations they theretofore had leniently tolerated, while, reversely, the 'confessional absolutism' of the Hapsburgs was superseded by a tolerant policy that paved the way for diverse religious and confessional groups to settle within the imperial domains, become involved in trading and other mercantile activities, and prosper. Let me shortly elaborate on both.

Indeed, as concerns the Ottoman case, even though for centuries the Empire's structure had been anything but conducive in terms of opening new trade channels and creating new marketing networks, and merchants' activities were mostly confined within the boundaries of Istanbul, from the mid-18th-century, developing trends of world-economy and a novel political culture, in effect the eschewing of the ancien régime, generated a strong pull that primarily had an impact on the Balkans and Western Anatolia. Combined, (i) the cyclical upturn in grain prices, (ii) the increased demand generated by the nascent industries, mainly of Western Europe, and iii) the successive wars, along with the outbreak of the American and French Revolutions, ushered in immense opportunities for making profit through contraband trade activities. The considerable vacuum that the Napoleonic Wars left in the Eastern Mediterranean was swiftly filled by native Greek merchant shippers—and later on by other Ottoman non-Muslims as well (Issawi, 2014: 170)—who got involved not only in such activities but were also charged with the task of carrying out the official Ottoman trade. The emergence of a propitious for economic activity ambiance drove such merchants to search for more lucrative enterprises, to turn thus their gaze towards Western markets. Burgeoning networks in the Balkans, moreover, significantly reduced the funneling of cash revenues from their wealthy provinces to the capital and facilitated the diversion of goods away from other imperial centers. Alongside these developments, the monetary chaos facing the Empire's monetary system, and the attendant debasement of Ottoman monies did only add up to the power and prestige of those few of the aforementioned groups who had access to

hard currency, gold and silver, who, in turn, began to lend money at exorbitant rates to various actors within the Ottoman society, profiting thereby from usury (Kasaba, 1987: 816-22). Additional parameters, such as (i) the so-called 'capitulations,' i.e. bilateral agreements between the Empire and European states through which certain rights and privileges were bestowed upon European nationals who lived and were active as professionals in Ottoman lands, as well as upon Ottoman subjects, predominantly non-Muslims, who were employed by them or enjoyed their protection on occasion (*protegés*) (Masters, 2009a; Yildirim, 2010a; see also Kasaba, 1987: 830-5); (ii) the Anglo-Ottoman commercial treaty (Treaty of Balta Liman), signed in 1838, that inaugurated an era of free trade and open market relations, thus of intensive competition, all to the detriment of the hitherto dominant Ottoman monopolies (Kasaba, 1988: 47; Ahmad, 2000: 5; Findley, 2008: 13); Fikret Adanir (2005: 407) argues that the signing of that treaty signifies 'Ottoman determination to comply with European standards'; (iii) a series of events that got unfolded in the 19th-century which within the context of my study I discuss further down (but for a much more detailed analysis from a socio-economic historical perspective, see Kasaba, 1988), did only enhance the sway of Ottoman non-Muslims to such an extent that by the dawn of the 20th-century, to be an Ottoman Armenian (or Greek) meant—in accordance with the Young Turks' perception of Armenianness (or Greekness)—to exist and operate at the expense of the Empire's integrity (Weitz, 2010: 103).

The case of the Hapsburgs, on the other hand—the first monarchical Catholic state to allocate full civil rights to most non-Catholics (*Akatholiken*) inhabiting its domains (Katsiardi-Hering & Madouvalos, 2014: 8, 12-3)—is an interesting one, worthy of being brought into relief. Hapsburg rule was firmly based on the conviction that they themselves exclusively dominated the whole Christendom, forming at the same time a bulwark against Islam. Its gradual expansion and eventual consolidation was achieved through marriages and subsequent alliances, first with Burgundian and Spanish dynasties, then with kings of Hungary and Bohemia, whose traditional and local rights were, in most cases—with the sole exception of Bohemia—respected and preserved, and allegiance won over through the granting of privileges and concessions; state centralization hence remained loose, rather an elusive endeavor (see Barkey & Batzell, 2011: 234-5, 240-3). The confessionalization, along with the subsequent proliferation of the Christian Churches, that the Reformation ushered in across Western Europe and spread across the continent, had an exponential effect on the Empire's already culturally diverse demographics, stirring tensions and sparking conflicts, as exponents of the hitherto dominant Catholic faith started turning into a minority. The need to manage confessional diversity in such an inchoate, in terms of

centralization, state thus became paramount. As a response to the crisis, a process of top-down centralization in the form of 'confessional absolutism' was sought after; in that, the princely predominance over estates, jointly with the advancement of Catholicism merged into one coherent policy of statemaking (ibid.: 257). It should be kept in mind that Catholicization was also opted for not only due to being consonant with the empire's historical tradition and the dynasty's ideological legitimacy but also because the Catholic Church was the only institution resourceful enough and amenable to working with state authorities in the project of imposing confessional uniformity (Barkey, 2014a: 218-21).

Even though a first step towards religious toleration was taken during Maria Theresa's reign (1740-1780) (see Katsiardi-Hering & Madouvalos, 2014: 14), it had been her son, Joseph II, who ascended the throne in an era that the prevailing political paradigm was that of enlightened despotism, who enacted and put consistently into practice a string of drastic reforms—inaugurated in 1781 with the promulgation of the Edict of Toleration—that sought to redraw the established social order by fostering political emancipation, and to refashion the Empire in accordance with the imperatives of the Enlightenment (ibid.: 6-7). Quite telling—so as to grasp the insight of Josephinian tolerance—is the following excerpt of a letter dated July 20, 1777) in which he addresses his mother:

'Tolerance means to me that in purely temporal affairs, I would, without regard to religion, employ anyone in my service who is capable and industrious, and works for the welfare of the state;
I would let him have land and exercise his profession, and would give him citizenship'
(quoted in ibid.: 12).

The latter seems to bolster Barkey's (2014a: 208) argument that '[t]he 1781 Edict of Toleration was one such example of an economically motivated act of toleration.' Indeed, it appears that the ulterior motive of Josephinian toleration had been, as also Katsiardi-Hering and Madouvalos (2014: 15) note, to encourage commercial relations and exchanges with regions of Southeastern Europe—especially following the signing of the Treaties of Karlowitz (1699) and Passarowitz (1718)—and encounters with subjects of the Ottoman Empire that held an expertise in trading products vital for the industrial development of the Hapsburgs.

Way more vehemently intolerant attitudes though have been recorded in the Western fringes of the European continent. The authorities of the Dutch Republic (1588-1795), for instance, adopted an inexorably pragmatic standpoint when they

came to police the highly diverse society spawned out of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish at the end of the 16th-century. In an effort to consolidate religious unity, which for them translated to social peace, they stipulated, in 1572, the Reformed (Calvinist) faith as the exclusive public, state-mandated, privileged religion of the provinces where insurgencies had erupted, and one year later outlawed every public manifestation of the Catholic doctrine. I should remark nonetheless that it was not illegal for one to be a Catholic acolyte but only to worship as one. Their goal had been to dictate to the Catholics their ultimate subordination in a Protestant polity, palliating at the same time the deleterious effects of religious passions in an era during which the proliferation of confessions heralded an ominous future. For Calvinists, even though Protestant confessions were deemed erroneous, it was Catholicism that they tenaciously denounced since it was thought of as constituting an idolatry entrapping humans in clerical bondage and discrediting religious truth. The Reformed Church did thus emerge as the dominant institution within Dutch society, monopolizing public religious observance and in spite of the fact that in 1579, by virtue of the Union of Utrecht, 'freedom of conscience' was promulgated for all Dutch people, Catholics were still obliged to perform religious services in secrecy or pay a 'recognition fee' to the authorities (Parker, 2006: 270-5, 287-95).

Parker (2006: 293) draws a parallel between the Dutch case and that of the Ottoman Empire, arguing that in both instances the authorities had no other goal than 'to prevent rival faiths from inserting themselves into a public sphere ordered by a dominant religious creed.' 'Like all other early modern regimes,' he continues (ibid.), 'Ottoman and Dutch ruling elites held to the unity of the political and religious order. Public order demanded protection from the effrontery and anarchy bred by religious heresy.' The equivalent policies devised and means employed nevertheless do not equally converge. In the Ottoman Empire, for example, where Christians and Jews bore legal status (see below), religious leaders were not living in a constant state of fear of imprisonment or persecution (ibid.: 289). Moreover, it is important to underscore that the absence, in the Ottoman Empire, of a commanding, critical religious body, as had been the Catholic Church in Central and Western Europe, set the stage for an entirely different context to be set up—one in which '[d]ifference was not horizontally eradicated but vertically integrated into the political system' (Rodrigue, 1996: 84)—and thus for a sui generis conceptualization of religious diversity to prevail (Barkey, 2014a: 215).

The Ottoman Empire, even though often analyzed through lenses fraught with orientalist stereotypes, did not fail to attract the interest of learned men of the West who took flight to the Near East 'to acquaint [themselves] with those other sects

which live[d] under the Turkes, as Greeks, Armenians, Freinks, and Zinganaes, but especially the Iewes [*sic.*]' (MacLean, 2007: 213), and even of salient Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and John Locke, who, amidst their ruminations over the Western European state of affairs, did often make allusions to Ottoman realities, aiming to bring into sharp relief the staggering differences between the two. Locke, for instance, considered it an 'absurdity' that Calvinists and Arminians would freely practice their faiths if they lived in Constantinople but not in 'Christian Europe'; '[w]ould not,' he rhetorically asked, 'the Turks meanwhile silently stand by and laugh to see with what inhuman cruelty Christians rage against Christians?' (Matar, 1991: 72). Voltaire, in turn, projected an idealistic picture of life in the Empire: 'The grand seignior peaceably rules over subjects of twenty different religions, upward of two hundred thousand Greeks live unmolested within the walls of Constantinople; [...] The Othman Empire swarms with Jacobines, Nestorians, Monothelites, Cophti, Christians of St. John, Guebres, and Banians; and the Turkish annals do not furnish us with one single instance of a rebellion occasioned by any of these different sects [*sic.*]' (quoted in Çolak, 2018: 377) (for similar contemporary testimonies, see also Norton, 2015: 256). But also non-Muslim Ottoman dignitaries, such as Nikolaos Mavorkordatos (1670-1730), hospodar of Moldavia, had been—from a different perspective though, and, obviously, his vantage point—quite unstinting in his praise of the Sultan's policies and of the absence of an endemic persecutionary tradition. The portrait he attempted to sketch in his *Philotheou Parerga* however should be construed as an implicit effort to dispel longstanding virulent Western stereotypes and bring forth a foreshortened tranquil image of an empire governed by a tolerant and charitable monarch (Kamperidis, 1992). 'Concerning the cult rendered to the divinity,' writes Mavrokordatos, 'the Ottoman nation holds the view that it is allowed to everyone to honour the religion which nourished him at the same time with his mother's milk' (quoted in ibid.: 73-4). I shall now proceed with dissecting the paradigm of Ottoman toleration.

The Ottoman Paradigm

The Ottoman imperial edifice had been a highly sophisticated one; in combination with the pragmatism (for a nuanced critique of the way Ottoman pragmatism has been approached in contemporary Ottoman historiography, see Dağli, 2013) that defined its governance it managed to extend its longevity for over half a millennium. Today it is widely accepted among scholars that religion occupied a central place both at the high echelons of the Ottoman bureaucracy as well as at a grassroots level. Kristin Fabbe (2019: 45) argues that '[f]or the individual Ottoman subject, religion was an almost omnipresent source of authority'; '[w]ether one was a Muslim, a Christian or a Jew, religion played a large role in everyday life through numerous institutional channels.' Kitromilides (1996: 177-80), respectively, in a much earlier work based on gleanings of autobiographical testimonies of contemporaries, has demonstrated that it had been five overarching elements that moulded the collective outlook of the Greek Orthodox imperial subjects, namely: (i) the ecclesiastical calendar, as a regulatory pattern determining of one's sense of time; the passage of time was felt as pivoting on the succession of Orthodox feast days; daily life was punctuated by Saints' days which signified the changing of seasons as well as the organization of harvests, fairs, family events etc.; (ii) the places of worship, as a factor shaping one's spatial horizon; shrines and chapels, places of pilgrimage, worship and martyrdom, did form a 'geography of faith'; (iii) the dynamic quotidian involvement of the supernatural, mediated by objects of worship and canonized in the ecclesiastical practices; (iv) the entwinement of a subject's life with the sacramental life of the Church and its prescribed religious practices; (v) the interplay of sin, repentance and forgiveness as a recurring theme marking one's life. Religion thus penetrated every aspect of the life of the individual.

In principle, intercommunal/interreligious mixing was anything but cherished, nor encouraged, by the Ottoman authorities; a 16th-century fatwa (religious opinion) is eloquent on the matter: 'The religious communities should be separate' (Greene, 2020: 91; also, for a 19th-century testimony of an English resident of Istanbul that is illustrative of the same spirit, see Davison, 1977: 36); the adoption, moreover, by Muslims of a language spoken by non-Muslims was objectionable, lest the boundaries between the two communities become muddled, and converts to Islam were peremptorily enjoined to eschew any residual cultural ties with their community of origin (Greene, 2020: 91-2). At last, though one could by no legal means be prevented from settling in a neighbourhood whose demography reflected a religious mosaic, the standard pattern was that of segregation on the basis of ethno-religious

lines. Indeed, at times of population growth, when neighborhoods were exponentially becoming more culturally diverse, coexistence and tranquil symbiosis were becoming much more difficult tasks to fulfill—'[...] diversity did not automatically lead to harmony, and [...] coexistence was a painful process' (Çolak, 2018: 383).

It would be most likely a hastily drawn inference however to think of the Ottoman state as a purely theocratic one. 'In the Ottoman context there was no such claim to the genealogy of the Prophet,' highlights Barkey (2014b: 471; cf. Wigen, 2013: 51), 'even though the Sultan claimed the right to rule by divine intervention.' Throughout Ottoman history Sultans appropriated various titles—'*Khagan*,' '*Shah*,' '*Padishah*,' '*Kayser*,' '*Sultan*'—that implied claims to sundry cultural traditions—from the Turco-Mongol imperial one of the Anatolian steps to that of the Roman Empire and the Abbasid Caliphate, after the latter's conquest in 1517—to entrench their legitimacy before his subjects (Wigen, 2013: 49-51). Indeed, the Ottomans proved themselves adept at striking a delicate balance between the immense forces of religion and those of 'secular' political legitimation, and to consequently build 'a polity in which religion could not become the sole source of political legitimation but was only subordinated to the political needs of the state' (Barkey, 2014b: 472; see also Aral, 2004: 464-6). Despite often being thought of as an Islamic Empire, neither the Shariah—the religious law of Islam—nor the ulemas—Muslim scholars of religious learning—had ever held the helm of the state. By the 15th-century instead, the legitimacy of the Sultan emanated from his jurisdiction as the Empire's principal lawmaker. Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481), specifically, initiated, and Süleyman I ('the Magnificent') (r. 1520-1566) ensured that customary laws were codified and rights were enshrined into the *kanun*, i.e. the secular laws that pertained to the relations between subjects, officials and the state. The Ottoman paradigm should thus be set apart from those of other Islamic polities whose rulers were not entitled to legislate beyond the Shariah; as Barkey puts it (2014b: 474-5), '[...] the Ottomans contradicted such a dictate by opening up the way for the legislative power of the Sultan to promulgate 'secular' law. [...] In everyday practice *kanun* and Shariah worked together and were used to moderate between circumstances, and choose the best available path to peace and security and justice.' It would have been therefore more accurate to approach religion as a 'tool' bearing great legitimizing force, thus often employed instrumentally by the Sultan to have his own legitimacy propped up, both among Muslim and non-Muslims, through deeds and representations replete with symbolisms of religious nature. The multiple examples Karateke (2005) cites in his work adds up to the cogency of the argument. As argued (ibid.: 113), '[t]he subject saw the ruler as a kind of intermediary between

God and himself, facilitating the achievement of his own ambitions. This self-interest could be manipulated by the ruler to obtain obedience.'

It had also been along religious lines that the subject peoples of the Empire were institutionally addressed, both as social and political entities. And this is the domain one shall further explore in order to trace and identify the trappings of Ottoman toleration. Following Barkey (2018: 86), I here take 'toleration' to refer to 'the relatively persecution-free centuries of early Ottoman rule,' that is of the 14th- and 15th-centuries—when, as contemporary tax registers reveal, both Asia Minor and the Balkans formed welters of cultural and religious traditions, though compositionally entirely different in terms of the latter when their constituencies are quantitatively compared (Vryonis, 1975: 129-33)—that essentially adumbrated the subsequent backdrop of Pax Ottomanica of the 16th- and 17th-centuries. Moreover, in line with the definition coined in an earlier chapter, I consider Ottoman toleration as the relative (see below) non-interference of Ottoman authorities with the religious creeds of the respective communities forming the imperial subject class—the so-called *re'āyā*. Such a predisposition shall of course be discussed against a frame dictated by, but also proliferating, uneven power struggles, as the idea of toleration, ipso facto, implies; therefore the *askeri*, the ruling class, exerted their authority over the scope of activities defining the religious, but not only, life of the *re'āyā*. Early Ottomans did prove themselves sagacious enough to devise strategies that would invest their rule with rightfulness; ergo they never omitted to take into consideration realities on the ground at the lands where they by conquest expanded their rule and, in general, demonstrated remarkable amenability to religious syncretism. They practiced a policy known as *istimalet*, that sought to essentially win over the indigenous, in their majority Christian, populations' acquiescence to their rule by offering them incentives and making concessions, such as granting them permissions to retain their estates and manage their resources as they wished. Barkey (2018: 88) takes *istimalet* to have been 'a principle of accommodation to prevent disruption of relations of production and of the flow of resources to the state.' 'Given that,' she argues by citing the case of the monks of Mount Athos, 'the Ottomans made little of religious differences, opening up a way for Christians to be part of the Ottoman system and to benefit from it' (ibid.).

Its implications impinged upon three realms: (i) the political, since through the incorporation of local leadership to the Ottoman political system any contingent form of opposition were to be obliterated; (ii) the economic, in which, by maintaining their income sources both the authorities and the people could preserve their living standards, while the new ruling elite could also enjoy conferred privileges; (iii) the

cultural, in which the practice of *istimalet* implied the endorsement of cultural convergences, along with the downplaying of existing chasms, in an effort to gain the subject peoples' favor (ibid.: 86-93). Hasan Çolak (2018: 379) suggests that such accommodationist practices had been at the very linchpin of Ottoman state ideology, instantiating the Ottoman 'circle of justice,' that went as follows: the Sultanate's strength is maintained through the army—the army is maintained through the Treasury—the Treasury is maintained through the tax-payers—and the contentment of the taxpayers is maintained through justice. Overall, the state's efficacy, and corresponding success, was, at that time, to be measured by its capacity to adroitly control the diversity of its subjects.

If, nonetheless, *istimalet* had been expediently employed during the era of early Ottoman expansionism, it is the *millet* system that constitutes the agreed-upon fountainhead of Ottoman toleration. At the respective entry in the *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, Bruce Masters (2009b: 383) mentions that 'the word *millet* comes from the Arabic word for nation, *milla,* but in the Ottoman Empire it came to mean a religious community, specifically, non-Muslim religious minorities represented within the empire by an official political leader.'

Before bringing into scrutiny the system itself and the distinctive ways it operated I deem it necessary to make a short digression and briefly bring into relief the Ottoman legal system in order to clarify how the Ottoman apparatus dealt with imperial affairs. The Empire held a hybrid legal tradition; two sources of Ottoman law had been set out to administer justice: the 'secular' or executive kanun, and the Islamic law, the so-called Shariah. The two, according to Rhoads Murphey (2017: 36), '[were not meant to] represent mutually exclusive options in a zero-sum game revolving around two competitive and opposing traditions.' '[R]ather than manifesting such polarity and duality,' he suggests (ibid.), 'the Ottoman legal system can more accurately be described as a system of multiple, interlocking, cooperative and complementary traditions than as two traditions locked in conflict with one another.' On the basis of the 'religion-blind' kanun, the Ottoman society was divided, as also identified above, into two echelons, i.e. the *askeri*—the ruling class—and the *re'āyā*—the 'flock,' the subject class; the latter pertained to peoples of all languages and creeds but it gradually came to denote exclusively Ottoman non-Muslims, bearing connotations of one's subaltern status within the Ottoman polity (Davison, 1977: 35-6; see also Balta, 2008: 41). Correspondingly, on the basis of Islamic law, the Shariah, it was bifurcated into Muslims and non-Muslims. Between the two, it had been the latter that in accordance with Islamic precepts, imperatives, injunctions and general philosophy (see Shah, 1988: 217-9; Aral, 2004: 458-61), set the wider

organizational frame of 'protection' and enshrined the 'rights' of non-Muslims living under, hence accepting, Islamic suzerainty. To be more precise, non-Muslim adherents of monotheistic religions, namely Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, living under the auspices of such a regime, that addressed them as 'People of the Book' (*ahl al-kitāb*), were, as the clauses of the 7th-century Covenant of Umar dictated, to be dispensed membership and enjoy protection by being ascribed the subaltern status of *ahl-al dhimma*, called therefore *dhimmis*. In return, *dhimmis* were obliged to pay a tax called *jizya* (or *cizye*) (Bosworth, 1982; Shah, 1988: 220-1). It could be argued that, in broad lines, in matters falling under the ambit of the Shariah, the Ottomans held considerable respect for the 'human rights'—if the term can be applied retrospectively, however with a way more restricted scope—of communities, but not of their members as autonomous individuals; in contrast, in areas falling within the purview of the kanun arbitrary rule and standards had most often been the prevalent norm (Aral, 2004: 471-7).

There had been such religiously-motivated arrangements, spelling out both the prerogatives and the burdens of Ottoman non-Muslims, that set a precedent for the *millet* system to emerge. Three *millets*, to be more precise, were officially sanctioned following the demise of the Byzantine Empire and the resultant subjugation of non-Muslims to the Ottomans: the Greek Orthodox (Rum) *millet* (*millet-I Rum*), established in 1454; the Armenian *millet* (*millet-I Ermeniya*), established in 1461; the Jewish *millet* (*millet-I Yahudiyan)*, that even though operated as the latter two maintained nevertheless an ambiguous status until 1835 (Barkey, 2005: 16; Stamatopoulos, 2006: 257-8; Masters, 2009b: 384; Van den Boogert, 2012: 34). Their distinct internal organization was fully respected and thus preserved (Barkey & Gavrilis, 2016: 26). In what follows, in line with Van den Boogert (2012: 30-3), I discuss the three domains in which the autonomy—or at least some form of self-governance—that the *millet* provided had been important for Ottoman non-Muslims. I encapsulate, following Barkey (2005: 16), the type of realities its properties begot for Christian and Jewish subjects in three adjectives: separate, unequal and protected. Indeed, toleration in the examined case should be approached as having been 'neither the result of neutrality or indifference in matters of faith, nor [as having been] based on any principle of freedom of conscience. On the contrary, [it] was a fundament of the Ottoman imperial order and Muslim supremacy was enforced, maintained and reproduced by physical and symbolic means' (Gara, 2017: 58).

(i) First comes the domain of religious theory and practice, i.e. anything that touches upon theological matters, including church services and processions. Despite

the fact that Muslim rulers conventionally refrained from broaching matters of theological or liturgical nature, the wider Islamically-pervaded ambiance that prevailed in the Empire did, as a matter of fact, encroach upon almost every aspect of the public sphere. More specifically, in accordance with the prescriptions of the *millet* system, non-Muslims were restricted from restoring their derelict churches, chapels and synagogues, nor were they allowed to build new ones. Their maximum height ought to have been taken into consideration as well since it should not tower over that of Islamic places of observance. The projection and number of religious symbols carried along during processions were also subject to certain constraints. On every occasion Muslims' sensitivities should always be taken into account. Quite elucidating in this respect are the words of Mehmed II following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (1453):

> Ensuring the Genoese settlers at Galata that they could 'continue living in accordance with their religious customs and fundamentals, in whatever way the ceremonies and fundamentals of their religion have so far been customarily enacted,' he asserted that 'their churches shall remain in their hands; they shall worship according to their customs. But they shall not ring gongs or church bells. And [he] shall not take their churches and turn them into mosques. And they, in turn, shall not erect new churches'
> (Barkey, 2018: 91).

There had been exceptional cases—rarities though—such as the one during Mahmud II's 19th-century tour in the southern Balkans. Then, according to the testimony of a Prussian officer of his entourage, the Sultan inquired 'whether anybody among the non-Muslims had any complaints or whether their churches needed repairs'; 'in another village he even donated money for the repairs of the churches' (Karateke, 2005: 126). Such aberrations nonetheless shall be read within a specific historical timeframe (see below), and not be taken for granted for the whole span of Ottoman history. As a counterexample can be cited the harsh, strictly Islamic policies applied following the Great Fire in Istanbul (1660) that aimed to wipe out hitherto manifest traits of Christian, but mostly Jewish, presence and activity in the imperial capital (Greene, 2020: 85-6).

Under the same rubric of restrictions fall also the Ottoman clothing laws. 'Sumptuary dress codes, both for Muslims and non-Muslims, had an obvious relevance to attempts to confine the individual and his identity to accepted roles designated and prescribed by society' (Murphey, 2002: 137). Especially regarding non-Muslims, the aim had been 'to prevent fusion or confusion of identities by the

assigning of a distinct dress for each confessional group.' The wording of an order sent to the kadi (Ottoman judge) of Istanbul in 1757 is telling: 'It is incumbent on the non-Muslims to be on guard against and carefully avoid circumstances which, by dint of resemblance, may convey the impression of equivalence with Muslims' (ibid.: 137-8). In general, it was in the interest of the state to establish certain norms that would solidify and affirm the superiority and primacy of Muslims. Headgear and clothing formed the main visible markers distinguishing the privileged ruling class from the relegated subject one. With respect to headgear—'the most characteristic manner of officially designating honor and rank' (Quataert, 1997: 405)—Christians and Jews were prohibited from wearing white turbans. As for their garments, they were not allowed to wear colors such as green or yellow. Realities on the ground nevertheless did render those laws 'virtually unenforceable' (Murphey, 2002: 138), as their constant amendment, reissuing and reenactment bear testament to. What can be argued with certainty is that their wholesale disregard by non-Muslims could prove fatal for them (see for example Quataert, 1997: 410). Especially during times of social frictions, marking cusps within Ottoman history (e.g.—in some of its aspects—the Tulip Age, see ibid.: 407-12), clothing laws were meant 'to assure Ottoman subjects and elites that the world was still an orderly place in which all retained their respective political and social positions. They worked to reinforce the existing social markers, stressing control of men over women, Muslims over non-Muslims, and elites over subject classes' (ibid.: 407).

(ii) The domain into which administration and taxation fell, comes next. As had been the case with every empire as a large composite polity linked to a central power by indirect rule (Tilly, 1997: 3), so did the Ottomans follow suit and exercised authority over their non-Muslim subjects through their respective intermediaries, namely communal ecclesiastical leaders—the Patriarchs and Chief Rabbis—who were granted considerable autonomy within the purview of their responsibilities and onuses in return for the delivery of tribute and full compliance with, as well as obedience to, the commandments of the imperial center. A further clarification is pertinent at this point: Barkey and Gavrilis (2016: 26) consider such leaders to have been deployed by Ottoman authorities as state proxies within the community, endowed with absolute authorities, encharged with the task '[of] control[ling] the internal dynamics of the community in return for regular taxation and cohesive and obedient administration.' Gara (2017: 70-1) however opposes the said view; instead, she argues that the Sultans used foremost religious leaders as in situ levers, so as to enhance the state's extractive capacity. Especially until the late 18th-century, when concrete institutional arrangements started being put in place, the ecclesiastical

leadership and bishop's jurisdiction had been circumscribed, restricting them from having a say over secular affairs; it is no earlier than the mid-19th-century that those dignitaries spearheading the three *millets* become proper heads of their 'nations,' i.e. *milletbaşıs*. Critiquing the work of Barkey and Gavrilis (2016), Gara (2017: 71) poignantly remarks that 'the ideotype of the *millet* system that [they] describe is better attuned to the long-term aspirations of the Patriarchs than to the aims of the Sultans'; the latter, in any case, did not consider, nor addressed, the Church apparatus as one being based on a regimented hierarchy on the top of which rested the Patriarch, but as a bone of contention among several distinct centers which competed, often intensely, against each other to override or undermine his authority (on this matter, see Kyriakantonakis, 2021: 260-1). As for the burden of taxation, non-Muslims were obliged to annually pay the *jizya*; all ablebodied males were—as legitimized subjects of a Muslim state—called upon to pay the *jizya* in lieu of the military service that they would otherwise have had to get through; it essentially accounted for their exemption from conscription and vested status of protection. Women, children and certain other categories such as chronically sick or crippled were exempted from it. At last, non-Muslims were entitled to not pay the *jizya* if their protection could not be adequately safeguarded (Shah, 1988: 219-21).

(iii) The third autonomous domain concerned the legal jurisdictions of non-Muslim communities. It is by now known that the Ottomans demonstrated exemplary eagerness to adhere to a paradigm of legal pluralism at a state level. Such legal pluralism was, as Barkey (2013: 84) notes, 'never an uncoordinated and unbound set of laws emanating from different communities [but] a carefully choreographed [one], coordinated by the center.' Arguably one of the most groundbreaking enshrinements of the *millet* system had been the empowerment of Christian and Jewish individuals to appeal for the adjudication of their own legal cases not restrictively to the courts of their community, over which their religious leaders presided, but also to litigate in the kadi courts, i.e. the courts of the state, over which a magistrate—in effect the central government's representative—presided, in which justice was distributed in accordance with the precepts and enjoinments of the Islamic law. While the former's [communal ecclesiastical leader] jurisdiction fell into the domain of personal and familial legal matters, the latter's [kadi] concerned the adjudication of criminal cases. Such an option, it should be kept in mind, was available only in cases where both plaintiffs were non-Muslims; in contrast, litigations in which one of them was Muslim were entirely subject to the kadi's jurisdiction (ibid.: 94). Extant evidence (see ibid.: 95) indicates that there had been no few instances that non-Muslim individuals, prioritizing their personal interests, opted for

their cases to be adjudicated in kadi courts; not least, women found protection and significant relief in the Islamic courts, that issued much more moderate and favorable—when compared to communal courts—verdicts in matters of marriage and divorce (ibid.: 95, 97). The undisputed validity of such verdicts, as well as of issued deeds and contracts, was moreover compelling since thereby Christians and Jews' rights could be safeguarded against claims that Muslims could potentially raise (ibid.: 96). All in all, the vested—within the *millet* frame—right of non-Muslims to bring their cases before the kadi court sought to impel them to valorize their status as constituents of the Ottoman imperial edifice and thus contribute to its perpetuation 'by affirming their belief that the imperial government dispensed religiously tolerant justice' (ibid.).

In contemporary scholarship the *millet* system has received considerable endorsement but also been subject to severe criticism. Will Kymlicka (1995: 157-8) takes it to be 'generally humane, tolerant of group differences, and remarkably stable.' Conceptualizing it as a 'federation of theocracies,' he underlines however that by no means can it be considered the cornerstone of a liberal society, for 'it did not recognize any principles of individual freedom of conscience,' but, in contrast, moulded a 'deeply conservative and patriarchal [one], antithetical to the ideals of personal liberty endorsed by liberals from Locke to Kant and Mill.' The religious orthodoxy that was dictated in a top-down fashion within the *millet* implied that 'there was little or no scope for individual dissent within each religious community, and little or no freedom to change one's faith.' Elie Kedourie expressed, according to O'Sullivan (2005: 707), 'considerable sympathy' for *millet* politics. He took the latter to '[be] run mostly by men who accepted the weaknesses of human beings and were impervious to ideology, as well as tolerant of the diversity of the people they ruled.' He acknowledged nevertheless that nowadays 'there could be no return to the old system, now that it had been undermined by the modernization process initiated by the encounter with Western culture.'

Equally sceptical concerning the system's applicability under modern-day standards are Barkey and Gavrilis (2016: 35-9). In their work they underscore that it is only under two conditions that *millet* could flourish: i) a moderately strong state, since *millet* 'can not survive if the central state's ruling elite is too weak to step in when the community faces a grave existential threat, [...] when disputes across communities become too great for intermediaries to resolve on their own' or in order 'to get rid of troublesome intermediaries'; on the other hand, an exceedingly strong state has 'little incentive to implement and sustain a *millet* system; rulers in such a state will prefer to strip communities of special forms of autonomy, bypass their

representatives and rule them directly'; ii) the existence of intermediaries and community leaders who will be loyal both to the imperial center and fair to their flock, regulating also membership in the latter. They point out (ibid.: 26-7) however some of the system's positive implications with respect to the Ottoman case, such as the fact that it was proved itself—at least until the 19th-century—relatively successful in forestalling large-scale opposition to the center as well as in discouraging the harbouring of territorial movements against the state; it inculcated moreover a sense of localism in the communities. Kasymov (2013: 8-9), at last, is highly critical of the way the *millet* operated; he argues that the grafting on it of hitherto alien norms during the 19th-century did only ossify perceptions of Ottoman Armenians as rapacious and devious Christian subjects and, in effect, launched the normative framework for the genocidal campaign that ensued in the early 20th-century.

No unanimity as well exists among scholars with regard to the semantic content of the term *millet* in the course of the Empire's various historical periods (see Van den Boogert, 2012: 27-30). Benjamin Braude's work (2014; however the original text was published in 1982), which sought to trace the origins and periodical use of the term along with its eventual temporal canonization in the Ottoman vocabulary, arguably holds a foundational place in the lingering historiographical debate. Braude argues (ibid.: 69) that '[i]t is with the 19th-century reforming decrees of Mahmud II and 'Abdülmecīd I (see below) that the European understanding of '*millet*' clearly beg[an] to enter the Ottoman institutional vocabulary.' Even though he does not fall short of highlighting that the existence and function of concrete and well-defined institutions in pre-modern empires is a contested topic, he substantiates the aforementioned assertion on the grounds that 'the Ottoman Empire, at least in its heyday, [had been] remarkably rational; it had many defined and functioning institutions [...]' (ibid.: 70) (for a convincing analysis on this matter, see Barkey, 2016); 'the absence [therefore] of an explicit technical term is highly significant in such a term-conscious bureaucracy' since it clearly betrays the lack of a definite policy toward non-Muslims. He comes thus to infer (ibid.: 70) that 'the so-called *millet* system [...] was not an institution or even a group of institutions, but rather [...] a set of arrangements, largely local, with considerable variation over time and place.' For Balta (2008: 43-4), that 19th-century re-enunciation of the *millet* under a new light alongside its institutionalization, 'reflects the change in the dynamic of religious otherness of conqueror and conquered,' implying the starting from the mid-18th-century increasing involvement of *dhimmis* in the Empire's economic activity and the concomitant accumulation of socio-economic capital, thus of power within the imperial structure, a fact that until then had been unthinkable and

unheard-of. Various other affiliated terms have also been detected to have been at play. Konortas (1999: 171), for example, argues, invoking ecclesiastical documents, that during the period of early Ottoman rule, the term *tâ'ife*, which in Ottoman Turkish stands for 'group,' appears to have been employed to refer not only to religious communities but to groups in general—the guilds, for instance. In the same vein, Kursar (2013: 103-7) cites a range of 17th-century documents issued at the northwestern far end of the Empire, in provinces such as Sarajevo, Mostar and Dubrovnik, in which terms such as *din* ('religion'), *mezheb* ('creed') or *kefere* ('unbelievers') are used interchangeably with *millet*. Besides, references to a 'Latin *millet*' are also encountered. Probing those documents, it is argued that it was only the central government that used the term '*millet*' while local administration most often opted for conventional terms.

At last, there are two more points I wish to stress. The first concerns the manifold, nuanced and alterable character of Ottoman toleration. Barkey (2018: 95), drawing the focus on the determining role of the dynamic dialectical processes shaping the latter, comes to conclude that '[i]t was rather an organizational byproduct of top-down interests in legibility and interreligious peace and order and bottom-up concern for maintaining an interference- and coercion-free imperial space.' 'The upside of such an arrangement,' she underscores, 'was that once it was perceived as successful, it acquired momentum as it got reproduced and applied more widely. The downside, [on the other hand], was that it could be maintained as long as boundaries were prevalent and state and social actors were powerful enough to define and preserve the rules of inter- and intra- boundary relations.' This implies that by no means should toleration be understood as a steadfast, unwavering, privileged and indiscriminately applied-across-time policy; rather, it was, as Molly Greene (2020: 78) puts it, 'just a governing strategy and there were others, such as persecution, assimilation, conversion, expulsion—that the state could and did use'; 'it depended [therefore] on circumstance, was subject to change and could be withdrawn' (Gara, 2017: 75). A case in point, for example, brought up by Grillo (1998: 81-3) and García-Arenal (2010: 592-3) had been the antithetical to the injunctions of the Shariah—and hence to the covenant on the basis of which the *millet* system got established—institutionalized Ottoman practice of child levy (*devshirme*). Applied most intensively and in greater scope during the 16th-century, the *devshirme* prescribed the forced expatriation of young unmarried men coming from rural Christian communities, who, after their conversion to Islam, were ordained to serve either in the civil service or the notorious military order of the Ottoman state, the Janissary Corps.

The second, to conclude, touches upon the often overlooked intolerant aspects of Ottoman social realities and governance. If a fairly lenient frame dictated the life of non-Muslims, the same can not be said for heterodox, namely non-Sunni—given that the Empire was attached to the Sunni branch of Islam—Muslims. The latter's existence was perceived as a constant menace for the Empire, a persistent threat to its political and religious establishment (Eğilmez, 2017: 218-20; Çolak, 2018: 383-41; Greene, 2020: 80-2). Here, of course, a parallel with the West—where heretics were also victimized while those espousing a different faith were just regarded as 'alien'—can be drawn. The Ottoman authorities' ruthless stance towards them had been unyielding; to sum it up, non-Sunni Muslims were subject to what Eğilmez (2017: 219) calls 'incapacitating intolerance,' meaning that their beliefs, acts and congregations could, even if trivialized and accorded relative contemptuousness, not be condoned whatsoever; nor did the state hold an active interest in guiding those 'errant' Muslims in the 'right path' of Sunnism; its sole aim had been to 'incapacitate' them, i.e. execute, imprison or drive them to exile. This comes in stark contrast with the 'reformative intolerance' that was an option for non-Muslims when they were accused of transgressive acts (ibid.: 218). The most notable case in point is that of the Shia-oriented *kizilbaş* communities, who were labeled as 'rebels' and 'infidels from many perspectives.' The Ottoman administration's main anxieties about those Turcoman nomads of Eastern Asia Minor stemmed from the political tensions with the Safavids, who aimed at appealing through religion to the *kizilbaş* by furthering a religious-cum-social agenda. The Ottomans had been therefore determined to eliminate them; alternatively they frequently embarked upon crusades of 'Sunnitization.' Greene (2020: 82-5) also discusses the case of the *Kadizadeli*, a 17th-century Istanbulite religious movement that resorted to violence against heterodox Muslims, launching jaundiced critiques against their mode of expressing their religiosity, manners and mores. In general, Ottoman authorities held absolutely no interest in stirring religious unrest and counted on the elites of the three *millets* to safeguard social order and peace (ibid.: 91).

The Tanzimat Reforms

Tanzimat (lit. organizations; Yildirim, 2010d: 461; or 'putting in order'; see Findley, 2008: 13) is known as the period in Ottoman history stretching from 1839 to 1876, during which the Ottoman Empire underwent groundbreaking changes after its bureaucratic and political elites, envisaging modernization, embarked upon a highly ambitious program stipulating a wide range of far-reaching policies. Such policies, according to the distinguished Ottomanist Carter Vaughn Findley (2008: 14), 'responded to emerging global modernity in both its Janus-like faces, the threatening aspect, [namely] separatist nationalism in the Balkans [and] imperialism in Asia and Africa, and the attractive aspect, [i.e.] the hope of overcoming Ottoman backwardness by emulating European progress.' 'The Tanzimat,' he contends (ibid.), 'was both a time of crises, which implied impending collapse, and of accelerating reforms, which signified renewal.'

Tanzimat reforms did not come as a bolt from the blue. Instead they constituted the culmination of a long series of inconclusive and rather abortive arduous efforts by the Sultans, dating back to the 17th-century—the so-called Tulip Era—when the Empire's progressive decline, deficit in military prowess, might and means, as well as the obsolescence of its bureaucracy when compared to that of the West, became obvious. It had been Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1807) who took a first bold step to redress what was thought to go amiss, with the inauguration of the New Order (*Nizam-i Cedid*); for Findley (2008: 12), 'the perception that the New Order required planning and regulation marks, in Weberian terms, the beginnings of the transition from 'traditional' towards 'rational legal' authority.' Later on, Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) pursued this endeavor equally zealously, foreshadowing thus, in effect, the promulgation of the Tanzimat (Akgün, 1991: 2-10). For the blatant failure of both—with the exception of Mahmud's successful dismantling of the by then powerful Janissary Corps (1826) and their gradual replacement with a modern army—accountable should be held the proponents within Ottoman society of the status quo, namely the ulemas, who feared that their clout was in peril due to the newly-propounded Western principles; moreover, Mahmud's overt leanings towards Christian civilization were disconcerting; ergo his renovations were regarded as 'infidel trends' (ibid.: 5, 9). Provincial notables, both Muslim and non-Muslim, were not content either with the various reforms aimed at improving administrative and financial conditions (Inalcik, 1978: 13, 18, 23). Both Sultans nevertheless, as well as other 19th-century perceptive Ottoman statesmen who held influential posts (see Abu Jaber, 1967: 221), understood that they were in dire need of external aid so as to

defend the Empire's interests at a time that the latter was being convulsed by serious challenges in several fronts: Muhammad Ali of Egypt's dissociation from the imperial center posed a grave threat for the Empire's own integrity, Russian assertiveness was being amplified, laying claims to Ottoman lands in the Balkans by increasing its influence over them, and local Balkan revolutionary movements had transformed themselves into a lingering scourge (ibid.; Yildirim, 2010d: 462; Van den Boogert: 2012: 34; see also Abu-Manneh, 1994: 176-81). Ottoman officials' growing apprehension and longing for an pragmatic solution are clearly reflected on the use, in the infinitive form, of verbs such as 'to temporize' and 'to ward off' in contemporary official documents (Badem, 2010: 339). Seeking to ensure the much-needed support of European Great Powers, namely France and Britain, in combination with military modernization, a range of administrative, financial, legal and educational reforms (for a detailed account, see Antonopoulos, 2007: 121-8; Findley, 2008: 18-33) fully aligned with the interests of the two were introduced. It is against such an ominous backdrop that the *Hatt-I Sherif of Gülhane*—henceforward Edict of Gülhane—was promulgated in 1839 by Mahmud's successor, Sultan 'Abdülmecīd I (r. 1839-1861), and, again after another major historical confrontation and agonizing moment for the Empire's fate, the Crimean War (1853-1856), the *Hatt-I Sherif Humayun*—henceforward Imperial Reform Edict—superseded it in 1856.

The two decrees irrevocably redrew the Empire's ontology, precipitating the reconfiguration of its centuries-long 'tolerant' social framework—the contours of which have been outlined in the previous section—ergo instigating the gradual emancipation and empowerment of non-Muslims within a modernizing and exponentially integrative imperial frame; ultimately though they did fall short of preventing its own demise. I therefore reflect on them on the basis of some relevant, recurring in the literature, commentary. Moreover, I cite instances illustrating their social reception at the grassroots level as well as among the circles of the neophyte Ottoman intelligentsia; I focus on the aspects touching upon the three domains of the *millet* system discussed in the previous section, namely religious practice, administration and taxation, and legal jurisdictions.

The Edict of Gülhane marked officially the dawn of the Tanzimat. Employing a rhetoric redolent of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 (Yildirim, 2010b: 380), it enshrined the official protection by the state of the 'life, honor, and fortune' of all Ottoman subjects and stipulated the institutionalization of '[a] regular system of assessing and levying taxes' and of '[a]n equally regular system for the levying of troops and the duration of their service'; it

highlighted—most importantly—that '[t]hese imperial concessions [were to] extend to all [Ottoman] subjects, of whatever religion or sect they may be.' That outright introduction of the 'concept of legal equality of Muslims and non-Muslims was a radical departure from the precepts of Islamic law, on which the *dhimma* [the covenant on the basis of which the *millet* system was established] had been based' (Van den Boogert, 2012: 35). Such a forward-looking viewpoint though is not espoused by several other scholars. Findley (2008: 13, also 18) highlights that '[t]he decree is usually understood as inaugurating equality among all the Sultan's subjects, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, but that interpretation is not entirely accurate.' Akgün (1991: 12), even though he accentuates the Edict's uniqueness, lying in that '[f]or the first time in Ottoman history the Sultan was confronting his people with a charter, promising and taking the responsibility of their welfare,' remarks—with regard to its character—that it was just 'reformative rather than revolutionary,' as it fell short of emulating Western states with respect to the radical administrative changes they carried through following their revolutions (ibid.: 13). In contrast, as Reid (1999: 199) has argued, '[c]lose scrutiny of the *Hatt-I Sherif* shows [...] that the reformers intended to restore the orderliness of the old hierarchical structure, with many changes of course, but nonetheless a continuation of the Ottoman hierarchical ideal of government and society [where inequalities prevailed]'; 'the *Hatt-I Sherif* intended primarily to return to some previous Ottoman golden age where social peace reigned, but authoritarian rule had ensured the existence of this peace' (ibid.: 202). Abu-Manneh's (1994) work is illuminating in this regard since it sheds light on the ideological precedents that underpinned the Edict. Objecting to historical representations of 'Abdülmecīd I as a 'passive witness,' he distinguishes him from his father Mahmud, arguing that while the latter strived to enhance the Sultanate's position and the power of the Palace, 'Abdülmecīd sought to fashion himself as a virtuous ruler governing in conformity with Islamic principles and devoted to the Shariah (ibid.: 175-82, 190-8). He further underlines the significant influence of Sultan's early exposure through his own mother, tutor and wider milieu of the Palace, to the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi belief, a Sunni order of Sufism strictly aligned with the ideals of orthodox Islam (ibid.: 183-8). In this sense, I should argue that Yildirim's (2010b: 380) postulation that the Edict of Gülhane 'marked a significant breach with the past and heralded an era of Westernization in the Ottoman Empire' is rather open to contestation.

If the Edict of Gülhane had been a timid, not-taken-in-earnest step towards the formation of an Ottoman polity based on the principle of equality and in defiance of the injunctions of the Shariah, it had been the Imperial Reform Edict of 1856, the

'Magna Carta of the Turkish people,' as Sir Edwin Pears (1917: 2) described it in an attempt to equate its significance to that of the royal charter guaranteeing political liberties issued in 1215 England, that sought to reaffirm—essentially this time through codifying (Van den Boogert, 2012: 36)—the Ottoman government's commitment in this respect. This came following the end of the Crimean War and the ensuing Treaty of Paris (1856) which by bounding the Empire vis-á-vis the contracting Great Powers, admitted it—though not on an equal footing, as Ottoman statesmen desired (see Adanir, 2005: 408)—to the Concert of Europe, hence introducing the Ottomans to the advantages of European public law and placing the by then ramshackle Empire under the guarantee of European legal and collective protection. Reid (1999: 206) points out that the 'very different'—when compared to the Edict of Gülhane—tone of the Rescript 'illustrates the paralyzing effect of foreign domination over the internal administration of the Ottoman Empire.' Quite telling in this respect had been, for example, the sneaking in, in the Ottoman realm, of new concepts employed in order to designate various social categories: In a memorandum concerning the religious privileges of Ottoman non-Muslims, addressed to an English statesman in May 1855, the Grand Vizier Ali Pasha (Mehmet Emin) did first use—in conformity with his Western counterparts—the term '*minorité*' (minority) to refer to the said populations of the Empire (Koçunyan, 2017: 66). What is important however for my subject matter is that although the Edict of Gülhane had not spelled out unambiguously the equality of non-Muslims, many of the provisions of the Reform Edict of 1856 did; it is indicative that the phrase 'without distinction' is encountered five times across the whole document. It should be noted nonetheless that mutually nullifying statements—betraying a social conservatism and predilection for old, compartmentalized hierarchies—were also traceable; equality, supposedly, was to be achieved through the refashioning of dominant institutions, not their extirpation and introduction of new ones (Reid, 1999: 207).

Despite such half-hearted and questionable in terms of consistency attitudes, the introduction—even if merely nominal—of programmatic reforms ushered in significant changes in the three domains I previously elaborated on, in which, in line with the prescriptions of the *millet* system, non-Muslims were tolerated and enjoyed relative autonomy in their communal affairs (Van den Boogert, 2012: 35-9). With regard to religious practice, while until then it was necessary for Christians and Jews to obtain permission in order to proceed with the restoration of any shaky communal building or the erection of new ones, either schools, churches or synagogues, by the Imperial Reform Edict of 1856 this rule was formally abolished (Yildirim, 2010d: 462; for instances of non-Muslim restoration activity following the Edict's

proclamation, see Badem, 2010: 346-7), on the condition however that such an initiative could be undertaken exclusively by 'each community inhabiting a distinct quarter.' The latter clause though was only perplexing matters of application since there were many cities across the Empire (e.g. Aleppo) where communities, often also those of Muslims, were intermingled. To add to that, that the way was not entirely, nor smoothly, paved for future constructions is also apparent from the phrase 'except in the case of administrative obstacle'—'an obvious euphemism for a denial of permission' as Van den Boogert (2012: 36) remarks.

Concerning communal administration, non-Muslims were now given considerable leeway to organize their affairs as they saw fit. Echoing modern standards, they were, more specifically, called upon 'to discuss and submit to [the] Sublime Porte the reforms required by the progress of civilization and of the age,' that translated to drawing up 'constitutions' (*nizamname*) along with forming distinct representative bodies. Accordingly, the Greek Orthodox community proclaimed its organic laws (*Rum Patrikligi Nizamati*; *Genikoi Kanonismoi* in Greek) in 1862; one year later, respectively, the Armenians' proposal for a 'constitution' (*Ermeni Patrikligi Nizamati*) was officially sanctioned by Ottoman authorities. Discussing the latter's formative process, Koçunyan (2014: 202) distinguishes another vestige evincing the liminal character of the era, revealing the cultural clash between modernity and tradition: While the Ottoman rendition of the Armenian 'constitution' reads the adjective '*azkayin*'—that denotes one's extraction, race and lineage—as '*milliye*' ('of the *millet*'), the corresponding English and French translations make use of '*national*'; nevertheless, at that time '*azkayin*' held neither nationalistic—as understood in the European sense—overtones, nor equivalent implications whatsoever (for more instances of terminological/conceptual confusion of the era, see Davison, 1977: 33-4). In 1865, at last, the Jewish leaderships' proposed communal regulations (*Hahamhane Nizamati*) were also accepted as a blueprint by the Ottoman government. In his work, Dimitris Stamatopoulos (2006: 260-5) expounds on the ideological and political osmoses taking place within the three *millets* before, but also the challenges after, reaching the doorstep of the Sublime Porte (for a more detailed account of the Armenian case, see also Ueno, 2016). Of major importance had also been the confinement of the purview of the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical agents. Clerics, it was stipulated, were to receive fixed salaries on the basis of their respective rank and not on the ecclesiastical dues they were hitherto assigned to collect (Inalcik, 1978: 6). Ecclesiastical property, moreover, including the vakifs (pious endowments), was to be shared with laymen and thenceforth administered by an assembly composed by members of the latter group alongside ecclesiastic dignitaries (Van den Boogert, 2012:

38).

In the field of taxation and jurisdiction, at last, the *jizya* was abolished, only notionally though, since it got substituted by another fee (*bedel-i askeri*) that essentially had the same effect, namely it allowed non-Muslims to be exempted from serving in the army. Notwithstanding the fact that the overwhelming majority of non-Muslims continued to opt for exemption, such an abolition of a centuries-old, religiously-colored tradition held a high symbolism, since, as Yildirim (2010c: 379) emphasizes, 'non-Muslims were now for the first time living under an Islamic government that rejected the notion of second class subjects or protected people [in effect, in stark opposition to the formal injunctions of the Shariah].' Mixed tribunals, presided over by non-Muslim judges, were also to be held; those were to be public and the testimonies of witnesses were to be received 'without distinction, upon an oath taken according to the religious law of each sect'; cases between co-religionists could still be heard in communal courts (Findley, 2008: 19; Van den Boogert, 2012: 38).

But how did the various groups and constellations forming the Ottoman socio-political realm perceive and react to the imperatives of the Tanzimat—more specifically to the question of equality and the realities it aspired to engender? For Armenians—especially those living in the eastern provinces of the Empire—the reforms, in spite of their slow implementation, spawned hopes for the amelioration of their status. Significantly, from the late 1840s, takrīrs (official reports) were frequently being issued through the Armenian Patriarchate to the central government in an effort to raise awareness and ask for measures that could provide solutions to the hardships they faced, namely their maltreatment by local officials, the tax collectors' predatory appetites and, most importantly, violence against them. It is particularly telling that in their appeals the language and reason of the Tanzimat were employed, attesting thus the high expectations raised with respect to their social status within the transforming Empire at this watershed moment. Along the same lines—invoking the Tanzimat precepts—were also framed the relevant recommendations shared by the Istanbulite Armenian elites. For the latter, it would have been the equal participation of their co-ethnics in the Ottoman army that would constitute a first resolute step taken on behalf of their community towards the establishment of full equality (Ueno, 2013). The uprisings in Nish (1841) and in Vidin (1850) moreover, instigated on the pretext of non-Muslim peasants' opposition to the increased taxation, but in actual fact due to the towering distress that they felt because of the slow adoption of the Tanzimat provisions, do also tell the familiar at that time for the Empire story: provincial notables were by no means willing to abandon their old

posts and vested privileges, sparking thus enthusiastic non-Muslims' fury (Inalcik, 1978: 21-33).

The same can not be said for common Ottoman Muslims, whose scepticism towards such a Western-incubated doctrine, along with their religious fervor, were persistent and rather insurmountable. These originated in an inherent feeling of superiority that emanated from the conviction that Islam held exclusivity in matters of religious truth; this, in turn, made them regard Christians—the '*gavurs*' (infidels) as they condescendingly labeled them—as subservient. A lingering prejudice and fierce resistance against any kind of innovation did only add up to their opposition. As Roderic Davison (1954: 856) puts it, '[...] the trend of the Tanzimat toward new institutions carried a profound psychological shock in its implication that the traditional Ottoman way of life was not in all respects the best, and that in Christian Europe some things were done better. Imponderables like these confronted the doctrine of Muslim-Christian equality.' Christians, in general, were seen as working against the Empire's interests, and feelings of resentment festered after the rebellion in Crete (1866) and the forfeiture of Belgrade. The propagation of equality through the addition of an anti-defamation clause in the Edict of 1856—stipulating the effacement of '[e]very distinction or designation tending to make any class whatever of the subjects of [the] Empire inferior to another class, on account of their religion, language, or race [...]'—was moreover seen as challenging Turkish Muslims' hegemonic worldview: 'Now we can't call a *gavur* a *gavur*,' they often muttered grudgingly. At last, Christians' disinterestedness in serving the Ottoman army was decried; but also when they decided to do so, Muslims were not willing to serve as subalterns to Christian officers. Some Muslim dignitaries did additionally stress the impracticality of embedding several religious leaders—one for each Christian confession and a rabbi for the Jews—in each army battalion, of having to square different fasting cultures, and of having to device novel strategies—eschewing centuries-old references to Islamic martyrdom—in order to stir religious feelings and spur into action. It goes without saying that conversions to Christianity were hardly palatable (Davison, 1954: 855-61; Abu Jaber, 1967: 221; Inalcik, 1978: 4; Badem, 2010: 340).

As for the leading men of the Tanzimat—the '*gavur* pashas' as they were disparangly designated by those disfavoring their reformism (Davison, 1954: 859)—no unanimity existed among them: For the conservative Ali Pasha, Turks and Islam should hold primacy with regard to the state's governance, and it was only in the wake of the events in Crete—thus driven by the exigencies and not a solemn concern for the principle per se—that he stressed in earnest the need for equality

among Ottoman subjects; Reshid held the conviction that it was only through the propagation of equality that all peoples of the Empire would turn their loyalties to the Ottoman government; Fuad considered the granting of liberties to non-Muslims as the only means to turn the tide against separatism; for Midhat, at last, it would have been only through the application of a rule of law that would safeguard the rights of non-Muslims that the Empire could spare itself the plight besetting it (Davison, 1954: 849-52). By the mid-1860s nevertheless, scathing critiques started being launched against them by another constellation whose members were acquainted with, and to a high extent embraced, Western cultural trends and ideas, the so-called 'Young Ottomans.' Politically speaking, the Young Ottomans were proponents of constitutionalism and regarded the establishment of a representative parliamentary system as the sole avenue that could furnish the agglutinative elements necessary to preserve the Empire's coherence (Demirağ, 2005: 146; Findley, 2008: 32); in parallel they deeply valued Islamic thought, and thus considered it an indispensable part in underpinning the wider reform program; Namik Kemal, one of their most vocal exponents, sought to demonstrate that Shariah itself embodied all the principles that the European Great Powers aspired to ingrain in the Ottoman polity, and—most importantly—that it propounded egalitarianism (Rahme, 1999: 31-3). The Tanzimat, for them, was nothing more than a Western-moulded cultural imposition; it was thus doomed to fail without remedying the Empire's open wounds.

In spite of their discord, there had been however two cruxes in which opinions of the two opposing sides converged, namely the need to avert the Empire's dismemberment, and the need to conceptualize—and in turn inculcate into its subject peoples—a territorially-based, patriotically infused, civic identity of Ottomanism (*Osmanlilik*) 'as an antidote to separatism,' as Findley (2008: 28) puts it (ibid.: 29-30; Davison, 1954: 852, 862-4; Demirağ, 2005: 146-7). Later and most recent studies (see Hanley, 2016: 285-6; Torunoğlu, 2021) have demonstrated that the enactment of the Ottoman Nationality Law of 1869—a contrivance derived from such political fermentations—held as its basic implicit premise, along with the palpable need to instill to Ottoman subjects a deeply felt patriotism, the need to stem the corrosive for the Empire tide of the extraterritorial privileges conferred to non-Muslims by agents of the Great Powers under the regime of the capitulations (Davison, 1977: 42; Masters, 2009a; Yildirim, 2010a), which for more than a century, Ottoman statesmen, and after 1908 the rapidly politicizing Ottoman Turkish public, regarded as a [European] Damoclean sword over their heads. Particularly telling in this respect is the editorial of the newspaper *Tanin*, published one day after the regime's unilateral abolishment, 10 September 1914 (quoted in Ahmad, 2000: 18-9).

Equality as a Catalyst for Socio-political Change

Arguably among the most decisive implications of the Tanzimat that had a direct impact on the wider socio-political realm, had been the rise of Ottoman 'print capitalism' (Findley, 2008: 31; Coşkun, 2009: 554) and the progressive emergence of a burgeoning middle class which by virtue of the inaugurated programmatic reforms and the elevated status of its members—corollary of their entrepreneurial acumen and expanding investments (see below)—could now have a say in communal affairs that hitherto fell within the exclusive competence of leading ecclesiastic institutions and their respective agents. Şerif Mardin (2007) has demonstrated, by tapping into the nascent, growingly vernacularized discursive schemes of the era, as well as the reconfiguring normative frame of the Ottoman polity, that essentially it is then that a compact public sphere gradually emerges; one that sought to create a collectivity whose ontology would be infused by an allegiance that would go beyond a mere devotion to the Sultan.

Within the circles of the Greek Orthodox community—the community on which my analysis focuses—the fading of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's authority and the eventual abolishment, in accordance with the commandments of the Imperial Reform Edict, of the longtime established oligarchic system, known as *gerontismos*, heralded the increasing involvement in Church affairs of prosperous lay dignitaries who, having taken advantage of the lifting of constraints in trade and the intensifying economic competition that defined the era (which I have already discussed on pages 12-3), had managed to accumulate capital and thus held significant sway over sectors such as banking and commerce, the two main activities in which Greeks of the Empire held an upper hand in relation to other non-Muslims (Exertzoglou, 1999: 89-93; Issawi, 2014: 160-2). Following the Edict's promulgation in 1856, more specifically, a 'National Assembly' was formed out of representatives and dignitaries of the community demanding the implementation of its provisions. The ensuing internal consultations and further processes that transpired between 1858 and 1860 culminated in the composition a constitutional text that provisionally put forward the laws in accordance with which the community was to be governed, known as 'General Regulations'; the latter, after having been subject to scrutiny and revisions—such as the addition of an Article which conferred on the Sublime Porte the right to exclude from the process of the Election of the Patriarch persons it disfavored—by the Ottoman authorities, was ratified by the Sublime Porte in 1862 (Stamatopoulos, 2006: 259-60; Kitromilides, 2019: 48-9).

A number of administrative bodies were concomitantly set up and became

officially institutionalized within the *millet*; these, in practice, functioned as 'guardians of the Ottoman law,' comprising part and parcel of the state mechanism. Their autonomy nevertheless, from a regulatory point of view, had been extremely limited, as Anastassiadou-Dumont's (2015) study of the records of the Greek Orthodox parishes of Istanbul demonstrates. Such parishes basically formed the lower echelon of a control-pyramid at the very top of which stood the Ottoman ministry and half-way the Ecumenical Patriarchate in tandem with another novel executive organ, the 'Permanent National Mixed Council' (see below). They were administered by a *muhtar*, the purview of whose jurisdictions had been very specific. Only rarely did he issue documents directly addressing the Ottoman administration; customarily those were first addressed to the Phanar, which held the authority for producing Ottoman Turkish language, and from then in turn to higher state agencies (ibid.: 9-10). The hitherto informal representation of the lay element in Church administration and communal affairs got moreover formally standardized. Stamatopoulos (2006: 260) considers particularly decisive the shrinking of the role of guilds in the management of the Patriarchate's 'material affairs' and in having a say in the process of erecting the Patriarch—roles that they hitherto conventionally held—and correspondingly stresses the significance of the concomitant, now-formal involvement of individuals from Neo-Phanariot circles and the emerging bourgeoisie (see below) in both processes. A 'Permanent National Mixed Council,' it was also ordained, formed by eight lay members and four metropolitans of the Holy Synod, and presided over by the Patriarch, would be the only legitimate entity on which the management of the Patriarchate's economic and administrative affairs would be incumbent (Stamatopoulos, 2006: 259-60; Kitromilides, 2019: 48-9).

Meanwhile in Istanbul—the city that lies at the epicenter of my study—a highly self-conscious in terms of social and professional mores and practices—especially when juxtaposed with those of other members of the Rum *millet* (Vlachs, Serbs, Bulgarians etc.), as well as with Greek-speaking Orthodox migrant peasants from the provinces, or even Constantinopolitan Greeks bearing a lower occupational status (see Exertzoglou, 2008: 143-51)—thriving middle class had started rising; from the 1840s, a new, salient social layer, comprising lawyers, doctors, bankers, engineers, pharmacists, merchants, employees or agents of large-scale Western-European firms, ship-owning and insurance companies, banks and commercial houses which operated in the Near East and the Levant, asserted itself, aspiring to be actively engaged in Ottoman political affairs, becoming thus more and more vocal (Antonopoulos, 2007: 93-4).

It is against such a booming backdrop that a vibrant journalistic activity came to

fore, for the newspaper was now 'to serve the modern man as a substitute for morning prayers,' to put it the way Anderson (1983: 35) did by quoting Hegel. Stamatopoulos (2008) distinguishes three time spans that mark the development of the Greek press in Constantinople: (i) During the first, stretching from 1835 to 1857, there had been two newspapers, namely *Othomanikos Minytor* (1835-1841) and *Tilegrafos tou Vosporou* (1843)—the latter later merged with *Vyzantis*, and continued being published under a hyphenated name until 1871, and eventually as *Vyzantis* until 1904; (ii) During the second phase (1857-1872), *Neologos* (see below), *Anatolikos Astir*—which, as a mouthpiece of neo-Phanariot families, maintained a pro-Western standpoint and sought to put pressure to Joachim III, the incumbent Patriarch, to carry through with the reforms—*Omonoia*, serving as Joachim's bulwark against *Anatolikos Astir* and *Tilegrafos tou Vosporou*, and *Armonia* were launched; (iii) At last, during the third phase, stretching from 1872 to the century's turn—quite an eventful for the affairs of the Rum *millet* period due to the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate and the resultant ecclesiastical Schism—*Neologos*, *Konstantinoupolis*, and *Eptalofos*, each advocating a distinct standpoint towards the religio-political developments, were circulating. According to the survey of Antonopoulos (2007: 28-36) no less than twenty-nine newspapers, and alongside them thirty-five journals (ibid.: 37-39), were published and being circulated in Constantinople following the promulgation of the Edict of Gülhane to the dusk of the 20th-century.

Neologos, the newspaper on the study of which I focused in order to glean data so as to address my research objective, made its debut in 1866—amidst a severe crisis sparked at the Ottoman center by the Cretan rebellion—under the title *Neologos tis Anatolis*. A year after, after facing a ban meted out by the Ottomans authorities in control of the press due to the dissemination of news concerning the skirmishes in Crete, it merged with *Omonoia*, and thenceforward circulated as *Omonoia kai Neologos*; it continued being published under this title from January to March 1876; since the 10th of the latter month it eventually started being published as *Neologos*. It began as a daily, and after a short period during which it was published thrice a week, it then again became a daily except for Sundays and special days of celebration (Antonopoulos, 2007: 51; Stamatopoulos, 2008). Its goal, as officially stated in 1867, was to 'contribute to the intellectual and moral renaissance [*anáplasi*] of the Greek society' and to cater not only for 'the publication and dissemination of news, but also for the grafting onto the public spirit of moral and political principles, and for the shaping of a public opinion, and for defending our own nation against the constant accusations and calumniations' (Antonopoulos, 2007: 54). Illustrative with regard to

the latter—to make a short digression—is the forceful defense launched against the allegations of the foreign press on the occasion of the apostasy, and subsequent conversion to Catholicism, of a young woman from Chios, whom the local archbishop tried to instruct accordingly so as to prevent her from such an act (*Greek Fanaticism ! ! ! !*, 1867). Religious tolerance is elevated as a distinct feature of the Greek nation which 'never offended against nations and their religion [...] and used its ethnicism and [own] religion for the noblest and greatest cause of civilizing and teaching [them]': 'We, who are accused for religious bigotry, consider that religious tolerance [*aneksithriskia*] lies in respecting all religions, staying loyal to one's own, never considered that, as we defend another foreign religion, the Mohammedan for example, shall insult another [...].' I should add that in the said case, *Neologos*' spirit appears to be in full alignment with that of the Tanzimat, since not only it defends one's right to conversion, but also the non-interventionism of the island's administrator who 'following the law of the state, following the laws of non-intervention, carried through his duty as he ought to do so.'

Neologos' founder, publisher and editor-in-chief, Stavros Voutyras, had been one of the most reputable figures within the milieus of journalists in Constantinople. Leading member of the Greek community and an ardent, indefatigable activist advocating national and communal action, Voutyras determined with his distinct personality the general physiognomy of the newspaper, for *Neologos* and other publications of him came to be classified under the title 'Voutyras' complex' (Antonopoulos, 2007: 55, 58, 62). *Neologos* sought to instigate a vivid intercourse within the Rum *millet*; it tried to expand the field of subjects it covered so as to meet public demands and interests; to codify the information it gathered and present it in such a form that it could be easily grasped by the public. It was a newspaper that adhered to the principles of opinion journalism (ibid.: 58-9). It is worth noting that it also followed European intellectual movements and the literary activity in the Greek kingdom, and tried to disseminate dominant trends, as well as scientific knowledge, among Constantinopolitan Greeks; in general it sought to promote the education of the Greeks living within Ottoman domains (ibid.: 64-8). Besides the daily reports on domestic and foreign affairs, telegrams and the political commentary, a profusion of sundry topics were being covered in its pages, such as medicine, law, theology-religion, education, history-archaeology, philology, music, sports, economy as well as several others. The claims harboured and consistently put forward by the Greek kingdom regarding contested territories in the Balkans and Asia Minor were also fervently supported and further buttressed through systematic efforts to demonstrate the allegedly historically uninterrupted presence of the Greek element in

Macedonia, Epirus and Thrace (ibid.: 69-82, 89-90). Stamatopoulos (2008) argues that *Neologos* 'committed itself to the representation of the radical nationalists in Constantinople.' Voutyras' enterprise was financially supported by the big Chiotian family of merchants and bankers, Stefanovich-Skilitzi, and at times by proponents of the Cretan rebellion and the Great Idea, the back then political vehicle of Greek nationalism (Antonopoulos, 2007: 87). With regard to its sphere of influence, it had mainly been the Galata and Pera districts, where most members of the Greek Orthodox bourgeoisie resided (ibid.: 91-2). Antonopoulos argues (ibid.: 98-9) that the journalistic activity of *Neologos* launched a platform through which the sum of the latter stratum's political, economical, social and other pursuits, demands and aspirations could be advanced in a comprehensive and resolute manner.

I now therefore turn to certain publications so as to put forward my argumentation, fleshed out with relevant quotations which I consider to be indicative of the developing dominant attitudes towards the political implications of the Tanzimat reforms among Constantinopolitan Greeks. These are all editorials, presented in the newspaper's front page. Covering the time span from 1867 to 1876, I cite three instances which—in my view—eloquently express, hence form distillations of, the Orthodox Greeks' disposition in particular towards the question of equality as a defining feature of the (in)consistent efforts to resuscitate and transform the Empire. I should mention that during my research I also encountered other editorials touching upon the said theme (e.g. *The Principle of Nationalities and Turkey*, 1867); nevertheless, I set apart and elaborate on those three since I take them to the most exemplifying, resourceful and telling ones.

(i) In April 1867, *Neologos* came up with an editorial (*And Again about Reforms*, 1867) that aimed to counter certain allegations of a circulating tract; the latter, which—it is surmised—had been produced by the ulemas, deplored the malaise that the Ottoman state was going through, which some, purportedly, attributed to 'the degeneration of the Turkish race,' and others to the scant development of Ottoman language and literacy 'that hinder the moral and cognitive development of Ottoman Muslims' and, as a consequence, 'made impossible the intellectual grappling of the two races, Christian and Muslim.' Purportedly again, the said tract argued that '[...] the distribution of equality [...] seeks to obliterate the Muslim race from the world stage [...].' On this occasion, *Neologos* seeks to refute such claims by justifying equality on pragmatic grounds. Before expounding its relevant argumentation nevertheless, it includes a caveat and stresses the need for a 'compromise,' arguing that, while on the one hand, 'we all agree that the present era is an era of progress, an era of culture, an era during which equality became an absolute necessity of the

society,' on the other hand it should be acknowledged that 'it is not possible in a place such as Turkey to directly apply radical reforms, extending to the demolition of the foundations on which the polity is established, and to re-establish it on new foundations, diametrically opposed to the former ones.'

For *Neologos*, Ottoman Muslims' decay should not be blamed on any of the aforementioned causes put forward by the ulemas. Instead, it is the entanglement of education with religion—'almost all the [political] bodies, and most importantly public education, were entrusted to the clergy'—that should be held responsible; a parallel is also drawn with Medieval Europe, which 'recovered from such a stupor when governments disempowered the [various] eclessiastical orders in matters of public education, and entrusted them to men who had an expertise in [matters of] society.' Moreover, taking as reason an evident contradiction detectable in the tract—that, on the one hand, argues that equality will be 'detrimental and pernicious' for Ottoman Muslims, while, on the other, remarks that 'without the distribution of such equality [...] the Ottoman Empire will be the living corpse of contemporary history'—it positions itself in favor of its establishment as the only effective means to transmute the Ottoman state's faltering nature: '[T]he results of the application of equality in Turkey will be various, and by this application no one is going to lose, except from those who have a benefit from holding the people in high ignorance and illiteracy, and never leave them to be awaken from their lethargy.'

The value of equality as an applied principle is then justified on pragmatic grounds. For *Neologos*, one of the main reasons why—reportedly—Ottoman Muslims lagged behind Christians had to do with the fact that 'they inherit[ed] public offices; being privileged, [...] the least possible did they care to acquire the necessary competence for any political or social work.' The employment, in consonance with the Tanzimat provisions, of non-Muslims in some civil administrative departments (Issawi, 1999: 7; Findley, 2008: 30; Yildirim, 2010c: 379; Findley, 2014) is then juxtaposed as a catalyst for the stagnation that the Empire was facing: '[A] proof of that is that [...] once such offices started being distributed to Christians and Jews, the Ottomans [i.e. Muslims], having started to entertain the spirit of competition, began to train themselves so as to become better [...] and to show off themselves as better than Christians.' It is argued then that, in contrast to suspicions systematically harbored against Christians and the principle of equality, 'the introduction of [the latter] not only [...] can not eliminate the Muslim race, but is the only one that can inspire her a new life through competition [...]. Without the introduction of such equality there is a real danger, and that danger is also seen by those who have written that tract, for this race to cease to exist.'

At last, the question of what kind of an organizational pattern the Empire should adopt is brought to fore. Decrying the notion, expressed all the way by conservative Muslims, that promoted a Turkish hegemony to lead the multiethnic, multireligious and multiracial mosaic of peoples forming the Empire, *Neologos* is quite explicit in this regard: 'It is not a matter of Turkish dominance, it is a matter of equality before the law, equality before the authorities and dignitaries, of all the nations that exist in the wide Ottoman Empire; it is about the way that all these nations, in agreement, regulate their own fortunes in accordance with their interests and those of the state. The people will see that their existence and progress lies in the existence of a common center [*koino kentro*].' A highly-centralized state therefore, whose constituents will stand as equal before the newly introduced institutions, is projected as the only viable path for the Empire.

(ii) Following the death of Fuad Pasha in February 1869, *Neologos* came up with an editorial (*The East and the Easterners*, 1869) that put the authenticity of an edited version of Fuad's political testament, presented in *Anatolikos Kyrikas*, into question; the said testament had also fueled a relevant public debate. There an acrimonious critique against the said editor/author 'who regards all the peoples of the Empire as adversaries who Turkism shall by any means suppress either by applying a Machiavellian policy or by corrupting their moral and national character' is launched. *Neologos'* main objection concerns the blatant distortion of the 'inglorious' Pasha's ideas by the editor/author himself, who, while he calls for 'a merging [*syghoneusi*] of the Empire's races, praising the doctrine of wide agglomerations [*to dogma ton megalon synepisyssoreuseon*] [note: Fuad Pasha did also refer to the principle of nationality as 'an agglomeration of races' (Davison, 1977: 51)],' he insists on the maintenance of old institutions that 'not only divide nations, but turn them against each other.' The upholding of such a policy to heal 'the wounds of the East' would be 'devastating for the Ottoman Empire, a poison served within a golden capsule,' it is argued; instead, an introspection is urged 'so as to apply not only the best contemporary remedies but also the ones that would heal the wounds,' and rather expediediently 'because ambivalence stands for stagnation, and stagnation in the East stands for demise.'

For the deplorable condition of the Empire, *Neologos* takes its governmental system to be accountable in the first place: 'As we delve into the past, we notice that the fundamental causes [...] are the discriminatory divisions of the subjects between overlords [*archontas*] and those under overlordship [*archomenous*] [...].' The said reference delineates effectively the perpetual power relations that framed the Ottoman paradigm, on the basis of which toleration was established. 'It is in this manner

[therefore] that mistrust emerged [...]'; for Ottoman Christians 'seeing that they don't constitute members of the state, but ownership [*ktimata*], that they don't have a motherland [*patrida*] but [merely] a place of birth [*gi mitriki*]' sought for salvation beyond the state's border and at the expense of the Ottoman government. Hence to the question of how such a state of affairs could be reversed, *Neologos* is eloquent: '[I]f the cause [...] is particularism [*merismos*], [...] then [the solution] is not the formation of a common motherland, and of common government, that would take into consideration only the interest of Turkism, but the interest of the East, and of its various peoples [...], as scions of one and this only motherland, as servants of one and this only idea [...], which also enunciates the testament [of Fuad Pasha] articulating it in the following words: UNITY OF STATE AND MOTHERLAND BASED ON *EQUALITY* [emphasis added] [*sic.*].' Any proposition therefore bearing vestiges reminiscent of the ancien régime is outrightly rejected: 'To ask for particularism [the primacy of Ottoman Muslims above others] while aiming for merging reveals a tendency towards elimination of those who stand as particulars [*merizomenon*—essentially, the *millets*] in favor of those dictating the division [*merizontos*]'; and any pretensions that a sustainable imperial model in which the Turkish element will be given precedence and elevated to a hegemonic position, so as for the others to be subsumed into it, could be established, are once again dispelled: 'But If the author thinks that the Christian races will feel the need to be amalgamated within the Turkish ethnicity, he is fooling himself [...], [since in this way] each of them will look for its center out of the Empire [...].'

At this point I shall also remark on what, in my own estimation, constitutes a discursive paradox in the said editorial, which—it is likely—either betrays a conceptual confusion, a premature, or historically situated, understanding of concepts such as nationality and the principle of equality, or simply a political position. Such instances remind us that we should be vigilant when conversing with the sources, and approach them not as being detached from a wider political and ideological whole. Let me elaborate on this. Even though 'merging' and 'particularism' are repeatedly invoked by *Neologos*, it seems that both are repudiated when they imply, or are perceived as entailing, the attribution of a hegemonic status to Turkish cultural identity, especially in the realm of politics. In another point, the editor lays out an interesting reflection, arguing that '[t]he merging of races can only be carried through when centuries of coexistence within a common motherland and under common government, based on a common interest of all peoples, and when culture elevates one ethnicity or language as *superior* [emphasis added] to others [...]. Merging is thus a matter of two to three centuries.' Given that such a reflection is articulated within a

text whose subject matter is Fuad Pasha's political testament, it is highly likely—I would argue—that it hints, especially if we re-consider the latter's conceptualizations, to which I referred above, to a contingent understanding of the processes through which nationhood derives. The editor's reflection however continues, focusing on the instance of the Empire: '[T]oday it [alluding to the aforementioned process] is absolutely impossible [...], it is, we would dare say, detrimental because it will obliterate the vital elements of each nation [...] that form a necessary condition for their progress.' The paradox here lies in that even though *Neologos* strives for political equality, and entertains the idea of a political community in which all constituents would stand as equal, and not as inferior to Turkism, it considers the birth of a nationality as the culmination of a long process in which a latent hierarchical segregation—the application of which is entirely rejected when the fate of the Empire is at stake—is given currency. Nationhood is thus conceptualized in entirely ethnoracial terms [in another point the editor refers to 'the insightfulness of the Greek nation,' alluding thus to fixed qualities] while the ideal model pondered for the Empire is one underpinned by civic foundations and liberal values. Such a distinction of course bears testament to the fact that the idea of creating an Ottoman nation—*nation* in such terms that *Neologos* conceptualized it—did not hold much appeal among the circles it addressed. Instead, the Empire's rehabilitation and progressive consolidation of an institutional frame that would guarantee equality for all Ottoman subjects, were seen much more favorably, since it was thought of as the only avenue to preserve their identity as a distinct political community.

(iii) Another eloquent advocacy of the programmatic reforms, constitutes an editorial (*The Shariah and the Reforms*, 1876) opposing the views of *Vasiret*, another newspaper, which 'strives to demonstrate that the most solid reform for Muslims would be to [...] preserve as immutable the system that in the past governed Islamic states.' *Neologos*, on this occasion, fervently defends the adoption of modern political and administrative institutions on the grounds that it is only through them that a polity can protect its subjects from arbitrary judgements and accordingly distribute justice, and takes the Shariah to be 'the cause of stagnation and decay of the state': 'Religious provisions,' it is argued, 'pertain to the ideal integration of man [...] but the development of such principles within social and political life depends on provisions enacted by man, the laws, which can not remain immutable, as human mind is not infallible [...] but follow, and progress accordingly, with scientific achievements. It is only in such a manner that political and administrative sciences establish a link with religions as they still tend to develop in its most perfect application of the ultimate truths that those proclaim.' It objects, moreover, to the fact

that a number of Muslims—'we do not know if they constitute the majority or minority'—oppose the reforms, 'contradicting the inescapable demands of the era,' and parallels them with the Jesuits, citing the relevant 18th-century anti-reformist maxim: 'Sint ut sunt, aut non sint' (let them be as they are, or not at all). Even though it is pointed out that 'Shariah recognizes the right of individual freedoms [...],' the question that is broached is '[...] in which way can these sacred provisions be applied when the freedom of individual rights is not enshrined [...], but is subject to arbitrary judgements of one or many [...]'—for *Neologos* to point, once again, to modern European norms and institutions: 'It is hard for us to believe that [the columnist of *Vasiret*] considers that it is solely through the strict adherence to the Shariah that it will be possible to recover [...]. Besides the adherence to the Shariah, let us search elsewhere for the remedy of our state of affairs, the country's and the peoples' progress. Let us search where the European nations searched for it, in institutions of *egalitarianism* [emphasis added] and of liberty, those two offsprings of ultimate justice [...].' A proposition against a theocratic form of government is also made: 'Man [...] is responsible before society, and society prescribes his duties by regulations and laws. The lack or non-refinement of such laws [...] ends up being sacerdotalism, God's Law, arbitrariness, absolutism, tyranny [...]. It is on God's order [...] that the aristocracy and the clergy were based in Medieval times.'

The ideological and political patterns discernible in these three instances, namely the craving for (i) the application of the principle of equality and the adoption of modern, Western-inspired institutions, which would also guarantee social mobility, (ii) the elimination of religion from the realms of politics and education and the enthusiastic embracement of secularism, and (iii) the preservation of a distinct identity as a constituent within the remoulding Empire, are recurring, demonstrating thus concretely the political position and outlook that the Constantinopolitan community of the Orthodox Greeks held.

Conclusion, Limitations & Further Remarks

The Tanzimat, as a Western-inspired and -furthered series of reforms—to put it the way Elie Kedourie (1968: 21) lucidly did several decades ago while surveying the implications of the diffusion, but also systematic transplantation, of Western norms, institutions, political patterns, and influence in general, in the Near and Middle East—'was not merely a matter of [introduction of] administrative techniques and political institutions; it was fundamentally an [ushering in of a] transvaluation of values, a transformation of one's view of oneself, of one's history, and of one's place in the body politic. [It] required the [Ottoman subjects, members of the Greek Orthodox community in the examined case,] to cease looking upon themselves [solely] as the subjects of the Sultan, and to consider themselves citizens bound to the state and to fellow citizens by a feeling of active solidarity.' Indeed, the new realities it set out to engender seem to have been perceived favorably by subjects of the Greek Orthodox community of Constantinople, spurring them to assert themselves and renegotiate their status within the Empire's socio-political realm. The reconfiguration of the *millets*, more emphatically, was seen as having yielded a fertile soil for affluent lay members of the community to enhance their clout within the sphere of communal affairs, but also beyond them; to seek to practice social mobility—though it remains an open question to what extent that applied to craftsmen and other laborers of the lower strata—and claim positions within the civil service, and the higher echelons of the Ottoman bureaucratic edifice in general, which hitherto were occupied exclusively by Muslim dignitaries who were appointed by virtue of hereditary rights and privilleges they held, not their competencies. Centuries-old conventions, such as the primacy of the Shariah, and the omnipotence of religion in general, as source of political legitimacy and moulder of educational theory and practice, were openly contested. The testimony of *Neologos*, I shall argue, evinces that for the Greeks of the Empire the dismantling of the 'tolerant' Ottoman paradigm and its supersession by one bearing Western trappings, adorned with novel institutions that could serve as bulwarks against the arbitrariness of certain actors whose legitimacy had by then started irreversibly dissipating by the forces of modernity, and underpinned by the imperatives of egalitarianism, was seen as the sole remedy for the evils tormenting the Empire.

I should however underscore that my conclusion carries rather limited generalizability. It is only natural that the Greek Orthodox community, as is the case with any community, did not speak with a single voice, but was multivocal, especially at a time of splintering and emergence of new actors—thus of new

stakeholders—who had at their disposal a wide array of resources to exert non-negligible influence on its internal affairs. Quite expectedly, the most avowed, unswerving polemicists of the reforms had been the clergy, who considered them a direct threat to their vested rights, prerogatives and privileges. The proclamation of equality was also strongly denounced since it was thought that through the furthering of Ottomanism their sway over their flock would be diminished, let alone the economic blow that was to be afflicted upon them. The Patriarch's reaction following the proclamation of the Edict of Gülhane sums up their wrath: 'Infallah—God grant that it not be taken out of the case it is now tucked in again' (Davison, 1954: 854; Akgün, 1991: 13). Quite expectedly, he was anything but happy to have his *millet*, which conventionally held higher prestige, relegated—and thus his clout in Ottoman affairs levelled—to a position equal to the other two non-Muslim *millets* (Coşkun, 2009: 554; Badem, 2010: 345). Others, as a work (*I Diplomatia kai I Ellas*) edited by an anonymous author in Genoa in 1862 (quoted in Vovchenko, 2021: 5) demonstrates, rushed to blame a snide attitude on the Great Powers, and took the Treaty of Paris, with the ensuing Ottoman pledge of promoting equality, to have been 'a disgraceful moment of diplomatic history' since it was understood as having set a stumbling block before Greece so as to halt its territorial aggrandizement. The political positions expressed in the three editorials cited above should thus be understood as echoing the concerns of that rising, increasingly secular bourgeoisie that saw itself as a distinct organic part of the Empire.

At last, I shall also acknowledge what I consider to be a methodological weakness of my study. Since my aim had been to study perceptions—what in my introduction, probably in a fashion that ascribed to it slightly deterministic overtones, I did term 'shifting attitudes,' given that I focused on an era of great global geopolitical developments—I should have also included accounts that spell out perceptions and attitudes of earlier times in order to draw a fuller image which, in turn, would have allowed me to survey and map milestones, ruptures and continuities in the spatio-temporal frame within which that 'shifting' took place. Certain questions thus arise: How did the Greek Orthodox subjects think of their status before the advent of the Tanzimat reforms? Did they consider themselves as being 'tolerated'? I should note that during my research I did not encounter any reference to 'toleration' [*anektikotita*].

It is by now known of course that toleration—both as an idea and as a term—got introduced to the Greek intellectual universe by the theologian, eminent scholar and ecclesiastical writer Evgenios Voulgaris (1716-1807), who by appending in his translation of Voltaire's 1767 publication *Essai Historique et Critique sur les*

Dissensions des Églises de Pologne his own 'Essay on Religious Toleration,' brought to fore 'the forbearance that the Latins in our time call *tolerantia*, and which we may not inappropriately call *anexithreskeia*' (Kitromilides, 2013: 49-50). The toleration that Voulgaris propounded nevertheless had been one founded exclusively on the teachings of the Orthodox Church—thus a far from liberal, nor impartial either—on which he tried to graft the rationalism that pervaded the Enlightenment spirit (Carras, 2005: 138-40). 'In this way,' argues Kitromilides (2013: 50), 'the idea of freedom of religious conscience [was] associated with Christian piety, making it easier for the ethics common to the Enlightenment to be assimilated by the conscience of a Christain community.' Tentatively, I may suggest as a testimony that notionally draws the contours and delineates the power relations of what I termed above as the 'Ottoman paradigm,' the first, according to Roderick Beaton (2016: 605), conceptualization of the *ethnos* (nation) in its modern sense in the Greek political thought, put forward by the linguistic reformer and educator Dimitrios Katartzis (1730–1807): '[W]e are not a nation (*ethnos*) such as to form our own state, but *are subject to another more powerful* [my emphasis]. [...] [W]e do represent a nation (*ethnos*) to the extent that we are bound by our ecclestiastical authorities with the highest level of administration [taking place] among ourselves [...]' (quoted in ibid.). But again the problem of generalizability pops up since, as Walker Connor (1990) has demonstrated, it is questionable to what extent such views propounded by intellectuals were popular among, and shared by, the masses, mainly due to the latter's high level of illiteracy that, as a consequence, kept them mute. The intellectual journey of the idea of toleration in the Near East, and its encounters with the post-French Revolutionary civil and social imperatives after their diffusion in the region, remains fragmented, obscure and hardly mappable.

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