

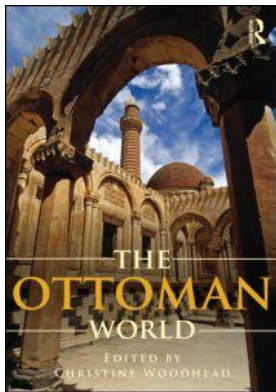
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## **The Ottoman World**

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### **Ethnicity, Race, Religion and Social Class**

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

ETHNICITY, RACE, RELIGION  
AND SOCIAL CLASS

## Ottoman markers of difference



*Baki Tezcan*

More than thirty five modern nations, from Slovakia and Ukraine in the north to Eritrea and Yemen in the south, and from Algeria in the west to Azerbaijan in the east, have at some point in their history been partially or wholly part of the Ottoman empire. During the last two centuries many of these modern nation-states have become independent and have developed national historiographies that have – with varying degrees of success – constructed nationalities and projected them back to the Middle Ages or the ancient world. Accordingly, it has become increasingly difficult to reconstruct the experience of Ottoman subjects in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire in which loyalty to the ultimate political authority had little to do with one’s national belonging, and the term ‘nation’ meant quite different things.

The difficulty is not just an intellectual one brought about by the rise of nationalist historiographies. The last couple of centuries have also witnessed an endless shuffling of people at the whim of political authorities, who did not hesitate to engage in a range of activities, from genocidal massacres to population transfers, with a view to creating nations which would be as ethnically and religiously homogeneous as possible. Thus, in many parts of the former Ottoman territories, the physical remains of the diverse Ottoman past consist of empty churches, mosques, or synagogues which have lost their congregations. In a nationalist present that hails homogeneity, it has become harder to imagine a diverse society in the past, all the more so because the children of the people who constituted that past are no longer there.

In short, as a result of the history *and* historiography of the last two centuries, attempting to reconstruct the Ottoman past as it was experienced by the peoples of the empire is a daunting task. Such reconstructions used to oscillate between images of a merciless Tourkokratia (‘Turkish rule’, Greek) and of a tolerant Muslim empire that created the Pax Ottomanica both in the region and for its subjects of different ethnicities and religions.<sup>1</sup> While neither of these two diametrically opposed images could adequately reflect the Ottoman past, studies on the subject of Ottoman ethnic and religious groups were, until recently, written generally in defence of one version against the other. However, as the assumptions of nationalism came to be questioned by scholars,<sup>2</sup> a new generation of historians has chosen to focus on the actual

experiences of Ottoman subjects as reflected in various contemporary sources, especially the court records, and to revise the more simplistic views of the past. The purpose of this essay is not to provide a summary of these more recent studies, on some of which more can be found elsewhere in this volume.<sup>3</sup> Instead, taking these studies as a point of departure, I will attempt to construct a historical model which could accommodate the multiplicity of Ottoman communities at any point in time during the history of the empire as well as the shifting relationships between them.

My inspiration comes from the work of Brian Catlos, who suggests that intercommunal relations in the pre-modern Mediterranean were based on the principle of convenience, that is to say, *conveniencia* as opposed to *convivencia*.<sup>4</sup> Catlos's work is grounded in medieval Iberia. He suggests that the diversity of the medieval Mediterranean (c.800–1450) was

the consequence of a series of relationships born of a perceived mutual benefit among majority and minority ethno-religious groups, reinforced by formal agreements set in law, and grounded in a mutually-conceded, if limited, legitimacy. These relations were subject to on-going renegotiation, either formally or informally, and the standing of minority groups tended to improve or decline according to their role and influence in the political and economic system of the principality which they inhabited.<sup>5</sup>

According to Catlos, a minority group's capacity to dominate 'socio-economic and administrative niches, which were not served by the majority, and yet which were crucial to the larger functioning of the economy, and in particular to the ruling elite', was essential for that group's survival. Their displacement from such niches as a result of socio-economic change contributed to their decline and persecution.<sup>6</sup>

In this essay, I use Catlos' model in order to conceptualize the historical experience of Ottoman communities. This provides a productive starting point from which to approach Ottoman communities, especially if one wishes to avoid the moralizing narratives of tolerance vs. intolerance, or such grand notions as the clash of civilizations. However, in order to apply Catlos' model to the Ottoman empire, it must be modified somewhat to allow for ethnic diversity within religious communities and to allow more room for politics, both internal and international.

To start with similarities between Catlos' model and the Ottoman historical experience, there is no doubt that Ottoman authorities thought about crucial 'socio-economic and administrative niches' when they considered their relations with the representatives of Ottoman communities. The long-standing urban professional experiences of Armenians, Greeks and Jews provided Ottoman cities with fine craftsmen, such as goldsmiths, excellent professionals, such as architects and medical doctors, and major international intermediaries, such as multilingual merchants. The role that many representatives of these communities played in public finance as tax collectors and creditors is also very well known. It is not surprising that one of the first acts of Mehmed II after the conquest of Constantinople was to order the deportation of Christian and Jewish, as well as Muslim, families from various parts of Anatolia and the Balkans to be resettled in his new capital.<sup>7</sup> The existence of Muslim families in this example should be noted. As will be discussed below, in this early period Muslims were regarded as just one of several Ottoman communities.

Some professional niches were available for Ottoman Christian communities in the countryside as well. For instance, Muslim peasants would most likely not engage in swine husbandry or wine production, leaving to Christians those activities shunned by their own religion. However, such niches were not as significant for the Muslim majority in the empire as were the urban professions mentioned above. Once settled, there was not much of a difference between a Turkish farmer and, for example, an Armenian one. Their ethnic or religious differences did not matter much; their most important distinction was the one they shared: being a peasant – that is, a tax-producer for the ruling class. Therefore the *conveniencia* model, which foregrounds the professional niches filled by minority communities, might need certain modifications when applied outside the cities. On the other hand, this model works well when considering certain political needs of the royal authority, especially if we apply the model to different ethnic-geographic groups within the same religious community. The way in which the Ottoman centre approached its Kurdish periphery is a fitting example. Ten years after Baghdad had fallen to the Safavids in the early 1620s, a bureaucrat in the Ottoman capital tried to persuade Murad IV (1623–40) to treat the Kurdish lords well by making the latter’s illustrious ancestor Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66) declare:

Just as God, be He praised and exalted, vouchsafed to Alexander ‘the two horned’ (*zû’l-qarnayn*) to build the wall of Gog, so God made Kurdistan act in the protection of my imperial kingdom like a strong barrier and an iron fortress against the sedition of the demon Gog of Persia. A thousand thanks and praises to the presence of the Almighty, creator of the races of mankind. It is hoped that, through neglect and carelessness, our descendants will never let slip the rope of obedience [binding] the Kurdish commanders (*ümera*) [to the Ottoman state] and never be lacking in their attentions to this group.<sup>8</sup>

In the early sixteenth century, Istanbul’s alliance with Kurdish lords had secured the political allegiance and military support of large parts of Kurdistan to the Ottomans rather than the Safavids.<sup>9</sup> Now was the time to remember this in order to reconquer Baghdad, which Murad IV did in 1638, approximately five years after the above passage was written.

In short, the principle of convenience is indeed helpful in approaching the relations of the Ottoman centre with various Ottoman communities, both Muslim and non-Muslim. This principle is also instructive when we leave the domain of the political authority and focus on individual members of Ottoman communities.

## OTTOMAN IDENTITIES

When explaining the multi-layered and multi-faceted nature of individual Ottoman identities to American undergraduate students, I remind them of the primary meaning of identity as stated in the Oxford English Dictionary: ‘the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration’. In the process of identifying ourselves, we use the qualities that we share with others, such as being American, Christian or anarchist. Yet at the same time each one of us shares different qualities with different groups, hence our

multiple identities: ‘Muslim like Ahmad, Shiite like Hasan, Iranian-American like Fatima, middle class like Michael, female like Grace, cool like Joy’.

Ottomans were not very different from modern-day Americans with their multi-faceted identities. Take Eremya Çelebi Kömürjian, for instance. He was an Orthodox Armenian layman, some of whose writings suggest that he was not very fond of living under Muslim rule. But then he had good relations with many high-ranking Ottoman officials and made a lot of money thanks to his connections with the state. Moreover he had no problem with writing in Armeno-Turkish, a language which offers some surprising phrases to readers of Turkish, who mostly expect that users of Turkish must have been Turkish and Muslim in the early modern period. Take such phrases as *bizim ermen tayfasy* (our Armenian ‘nation’) or *dinsiz t’urk* (the infidel Turks), for instance.<sup>10</sup> So Eremya Çelebi was ‘Christian like Yorgo, Armenian like Garo, a state contractor like Ali, and a writer in Turkish like Hasan’.

Depending on the specific interaction in which Eremya Çelebi was engaged on any given day, he could evoke one of the facets of his complex identity *conveniently* – for instance, by underlining his membership in the Ottoman financial elite when he bid or struck partnerships for tax-farm contracts. The Ottoman political authorities, in their turn, *conveniently* accepted Eremya Çelebi’s intermediacy in public finance. He was also clearly a member of the Ottoman literati. His title, Çelebi, one used by the learned Ottoman establishment, is one clear indication of this. His awareness of Muslim Ottoman authors and the latter’s awareness of him in their respective works is another.<sup>11</sup>

Continuing from Eremya Çelebi’s example, diversity seems to work best when individuals have a wide network of affiliations, allowing them to relate to multiple collectives by evoking different facets of their multi-faceted identities. Not surprisingly, if one of these facets receives more attention than the others, the individual might lose touch with some of the collectives he or she has been affiliating with and come to essentialize that particular facet of his or her identity. The key to the healthy functioning of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman society was, then, perhaps not so much the absence of ‘national’ identities as a lack of need to essentialize them. An Ottoman author of Kurdish origin, Şukri, who wrote a history of the reign of Selim I (1512–20) in Turkish verse and presented it to Süleyman, probably meant this when he wrote: *Türk ilen Türk ve Kürd ilen Kürdem* (I am a Turk [while being] with a Turk and a Kurd [while being] with a Kurd).<sup>12</sup>

That Ottoman individuals were well aware of their ‘national’ identities, based on their ethno-geographical and racial ties, and used them for their own advantage when they needed to could easily be confirmed by looking at the Ottoman ruling class itself. Metin Kunt demonstrated the significance of *cins* as ‘ethnic-regional’ solidarity by studying the ties among the *devsirme* – that is, the personal slaves of the sultan who were collected from among the Christian population of Anatolia, the Balkans and the Caucasus. He noted the existence of alliances based on *cins* connections, such as Abkhazian, Albanian or Bosnian factions.<sup>13</sup> A case also occurs of the term *cinsiyet* being used in a racial sense when the subject of reference was the ties between an Ottoman scholar of African slave origin and the black eunuchs of the palace.<sup>14</sup> Yet these ties, however important they may have been, were only one set of ties among many others, the most significant of which for the ruling class was their loyalty to the sultan. Thus when Melek Ahmed Paşa was asked by the grand vezir in 1658 whether he would fight

Hasan Paşa, an Abkhazian like himself, Melek Ahmed quickly replied that he would fight against any enemy of the sultan.<sup>15</sup>

Loyalty to the person of the sultan or the empire was not just a phenomenon found among the members of the Muslim ruling class. As late as 1798, Anthimos, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, stated that

Our Lord . . . raised out of nothing this powerful Empire of the Ottomans in the place of our Roman [Byzantine] Empire which had begun, in certain ways, to deviate from the beliefs of the Orthodox faith, and He raised up the Empire of the Ottomans higher than any other Kingdom so as to show without doubt that it came about by Divine Will.<sup>16</sup>

Eremya Çelebi, in his *History of Istanbul*, refers to the sultan as ‘our emperor’ and boasts about the many ambassadors who come to his court from India, Central Asia, Persia, Russia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Morocco, Genoa, Poland, Austria, France, England and the Netherlands in a way which suggests that he is as proud of the power of his sultan as a Muslim Ottoman would be.<sup>17</sup> A seventeenth-century Orthodox priest from Serres in modern Greece, Synadinos, who wrote a local chronicle in the Byzantine tradition, refers to the Ottoman sultan in the Byzantine fashion as the *basileus*, never calling into question his legitimacy of rule.<sup>18</sup> Thus it was quite possible to accommodate multiple national (ethno-geographical and/or racial) as well as religious loyalties under the umbrella of political loyalty to the person of the sultan or the empire.

The principles that govern the relations between different communities in Catlos’s model are ‘reinforced by formal agreements set in law, and grounded in a mutually-conceded, if limited, legitimacy’. In the case of the Ottoman empire, these principles came to have a little more than ‘limited legitimacy’. Ottoman jurists’ law – a term preferred here instead of *şeriat*, as it underlines the role of jurists in the articulation of the law – did not discriminate among different nationalities as long as they were Muslim. When it came to non-Muslims, the law had a built-in space that protected the rights of Christians and Jews without, however, granting them full-scale equality with Muslims. While such a legal system should indeed have had only limited legitimacy in the eyes of its Christian and Jewish subjects, the archival record suggests that Christians and Jews used the Ottoman courts much more frequently than previously believed. *Convenience* seems to have played a role in this development as well.

Marriage and divorce fees at the *kadı* courts were lower than those collected by the bishops. In addition, simpler procedures – for example, no investigation into the motives for divorcing, no conciliation terms, and no bans on subsequent marriages – and the wish to evade some canonical restrictions might have induced Christians to use the services of the *kadı*.<sup>19</sup>

When such methods to circumvent the canonical authorities were more difficult to follow – for instance, in Istanbul, where one was within physical proximity of the patriarchate – Christian (and Jewish) women resorted to Ottoman courts to convert to Islam in order to secure a divorce from their husbands, as a Muslim woman could not be married to a non-Muslim man.<sup>20</sup> This suggests that Christians and Jews not only used Ottoman courts for their own business but were also aware of some of its

finer points which they could exploit to their own advantage. Recent research on the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts in the Ottoman empire suggests that even in such legal fields as inheritance the Ottoman courts had the ultimate authority.<sup>21</sup> Even though there were other courts in the daily life of Ottoman subjects, such as the communal and ecclesiastical courts discussed elsewhere in this volume,<sup>22</sup> the courts presided over by *kadis* seem to have been the ultimate arbiters of justice. Therefore these courts should simply be called ‘Ottoman courts’ rather than ‘*kadı* courts’, a term that is still prevalent in the historiography even though it implies a legal system in which there were multiple networks of courts with equal jurisdictional authorities, with ‘*kadı* courts’ being one of them.

The imposition of a particular legal system, which is historically connected with a given religious tradition, on the followers of different religious-legal traditions appears problematic from a pluralistic perspective. Nevertheless, it could integrate different communities of the empire into one legal system and thus increase the legitimacy of the system as a whole. The frequent recourse by Christian and Jewish Ottoman subjects to Ottoman courts supports this assumption. In this particular sense, the legal arrangements that secured the Ottoman version of Catlos’ *conveniencia* had more than ‘limited legitimacy’. They had become the law of the land in a way not unlike that by which the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition became the law of the land in North America as a result of conquest.

All of this should not be taken to mean, however, that the communities of Ottoman society were well integrated in all aspects of their lives. As Catlos asserts, ‘diversity in pre-modern societies could only function if clear communal boundaries were maintained’.<sup>23</sup> Maintaining such boundaries was important for the survival of minority groups and the continuing dominance of the majority group. Not surprisingly, one of the areas in which these dynamics were most visible was the patriarchal hierarchies involved in miscegenation. That is why, for instance, Muslim men could marry Christian and Jewish women while a Christian or Jewish man could only marry a Muslim woman if he agreed to convert. While the boundaries between communities were porous, they were so only in one direction, towards Islam. A Muslim who left his or her religion would be punished by death.

Also, the principle of convenience was not as convenient to the minority group as it was to the majority. This was especially so when socio-economic tensions were carried over to intercommunal relations. Catlos draws attention to the fact that, even though the Christian majority in thirteenth-century Aragon was much wealthier than both the Muslim and Jewish minorities, there were still many ‘middle-class’ Jews and Muslims who were wealthier than many Christians.<sup>24</sup> To make up for a state of affairs that seemed inappropriate to poorer Christians, minority groups were occasionally subjected to actions that would confirm their secondary status. Populist movements articulating economic inequalities expressed their sense of deprivation by targeting minority communities.<sup>25</sup>

The channelling of socio-economic grievances towards minorities is clearly observable in the Ottoman empire. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the absolutist political posture of the court drew much criticism, a Jewish woman became the target of rebels. In the last days of March 1600, Esperanza Malchi, the Jewish *kiera* (‘lady’ in Greek), known to have been very close to the sultan’s mother, was lynched by imperial cavalymen who believed that the debased coins with

which they had been paid had come through her tax-farm payments. The soldiers had also demanded the heads of the chief gardener and the sultan's chief white eunuch, but were appeased after they had lynched Malchi and her son.<sup>26</sup> It was also in this era of extreme social turmoil both in the capital and the provinces that orders were issued banning the wearing of silk by Christians and Jews. Soon after, the use of alcohol was strictly prohibited, all taverns were closed, and the office of the finance ministry which collected taxes from the sale of alcohol was abolished – though all of these restrictions were lifted and the alcohol tax was reinstated eighteen months later, in autumn 1602.<sup>27</sup>

In short, however accommodating the principle of convenience was for minority groups, it was ultimately based on acceptance of the political dominance of the majority, or, at least, of the symbols thereof. What, then, is the advantage of the use of this model over the discourse of tolerance vs. intolerance? Most obviously, it removes religious labels from the historical analysis and provides us with a model that works in multiple contexts with different majority and minority groups. However, a much more significant advantage offered by this model is the possibility of integrating socio-economic issues into intercommunal relations, and even of assigning primacy to them in explaining change.

## CHANGING RELATIONS BETWEEN OTTOMAN COMMUNITIES

I will now focus on the question of long-term change in the relations between Ottoman communities, by suggesting that it was social mobility which was the destabilizing factor. It was pointed out above that, once settled, there was little difference between a Turkish Muslim peasant and, for example, a Greek Christian one. Other than raising pigs and producing wine, the Greek Christian peasant would not occupy a particular niche in rural society. Yet, he or she would definitely be paying taxes. Perhaps, then, the members of the minority group did not necessarily have to dominate a niche: it was enough for them to be good taxpayers, which was *convenient* for the ruling class. For the minority peasant, the *convenience* was that he or she continued, just as before, to be a taxpayer after the Ottoman conquest. If anything, the Ottomans were known to have decreased the tax ratios in certain areas to ease the shift in political loyalties from former rulers to themselves. There was not much else that affected a peasant's life directly.

I would argue further that the minority peasant's tax-paying subject position was in a sense key to his or her potential affiliation with other peasants belonging to the Muslim majority. Unlike in the city, where professions and trade brought people from different communal backgrounds together in all kinds of interactions, villages were much more monolithic. Thus, again, the way in which a Greek peasant from a Greek village and a Turkish peasant from a Turkish village could relate to each other would be on the basis of their shared tax-paying subject status as far as their relationship to the imperial centre or to their immediate tax collector was concerned.

The central political authority was well aware of this fact. The relevant political literature that touches upon the relations between the ruling class and the subjects had only one term for the latter: *reaya*, 'the flock'. It did not matter whether a peasant



was Muslim or Christian – both would be a part of the flock. Despite the fact that Christian peasants paid additional taxes in the form of *cizye* (the non-Muslim poll tax), in terms of being disenfranchised vis-à-vis the ruling class, they were as far away from political power as their Muslim neighbours in the next village. In fact, a Christian peasant might even have had a better chance of joining the ruling class in the fifteenth or the sixteenth centuries than a Muslim one because of the practice of *devşirme*, which supplied the sultan with loyal soldiers and administrators of Christian origin.

Thus, while in urban environments communal differences were mediated through economic and professional interactions, in rural areas there was little ground for communal differences to play a discriminatory role, as all peasants ultimately shared the common denominator of being subjects in the flock. The political authorities addressed all communal groups in the same language and treated them similarly. Differences of class were *the* most significant differences in the political literature of the time. Authors warned their readers not to let members of the *reaya* join the ranks of the ruling class. Those people who did manage to find a way in were called *ecnebi*, or foreigner, even if they were of Muslim origin – or perhaps *because* of their Muslim subject origin.<sup>28</sup>

The Ottoman ruling class originally consisted of conquerors who were predominantly of Turkish origin and yet included many former members of the Byzantine and Balkan aristocracies. After the ascendancy of the *devşirme* in the second half of the fifteenth century, the ruling class came to consist of the descendants of the conquerors as well as the slaves of the sultan, who were of Christian origin. To this ruling class, subjects of Muslim origin were indeed ‘foreigners’. In short, the ruling class discriminated against all subjects in the same way, treating them all as ‘foreigners’. A simple Christian subject (unless he was selected as a *devşirme*) and a Muslim one were equally excluded from entry into the ruling class.

As far as the Ottoman authorities were concerned, Muslims constituted one of the communities that they needed to manage and exploit by taxation. They happened to belong to the same religion as that followed by the conquerors, but in practice they were subjects, just like the Christians and Jews, whose taxes supported the ruling class. When around 1565 Kinalızade Ali considered the relationship between the masters of the state (*devlet*) and the *reaya*, it never occurred to him to separate Muslims from others.

[As long as] the union that is concluded among the masters of the *devlet* lasts, the supremacy and domination, which are inseparable from that union, continue. It is an established fact that each *devlet* begins with a group of men entering an alliance and acting like the members of one body . . . in helping and supporting each other. Each individual has a certain degree of power, yet once their power is assembled together in one place, it becomes more than [the sum of] each one’s power. Thus a small group of allied men prevails over many groups that are disunited. Is it not obvious that the number of men who are in possession of a *devlet* does not even amount to one hundredth of the number of that *devlet*’s subjects (*reaya*)? And yet since these men are allied and the subjects are not, the former become victors and rulers while the latter are defeated and ruled.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, as far as the Ottoman authorities were concerned, all subjects, whether Muslim, Christian or Jewish, were *reaya*, or their flock.

The reason for dwelling so long on this particular point – the common subjecthood of Christians, Jews and Muslims alike – is that it is central for us to understand how the principle of convenience stopped working in the later centuries of Ottoman history. According to Catlos,<sup>30</sup> ‘it was the inability of minorities . . . to adapt to changes in the socio-economic environment that might displace them from their niches that tended to contribute to their decline and persecution’. While agreeing that socio-economic change is *the* key to explaining the changing status of minorities, we should also note the political dynamics through which the effects of socio-economic mobility within the majority population are transformed into communal rifts in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. The first of these is the formation of a collective identity that connects the ruling class with the majority population, which is at the heart of the development of modern nationalism.

Even though not every Muslim joined the Ottoman ruling class in the seventeenth century, sizeable groups from among merchants and financiers did find ways of entering it, despite the protesters who called them ‘foreigners’. The late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were times of remarkable socio-political mobility in the Ottoman empire. The practice of *devşirme* came gradually to an end by the beginning of the eighteenth century as members of the Muslim upper middle classes came to man the administrative and military posts of the empire.<sup>31</sup> This was followed by a gradual shift in the meaning of the term ‘*reaya*’. From the eighteenth century onwards, ‘the flock’ came to mean Christian taxpayers only.<sup>32</sup> It is not that Muslims did not have to pay taxes any more. They continued to do so, but as ‘Muslims’, for this became the collective identity that connected the ruling class with the majority of the masses.

This process is comparable to the rise of nationalism in Europe. The displacement of a former aristocratic ruling class by a larger bourgeoisie was followed by the invention of the “nation,” the name given to itself by the “people” as it formed itself into the quasi-caste which it had never been in the past.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, not every Frenchman could become part of the ruling class, but each one of them could be proud to be a Frenchman and, with that pride, be induced to pay his taxes happily, while being conscripted and sent to wars in distant lands. Being French was the collective identity that tied the ruling class and the masses together and made the latter feel as if they had a share in the glories of their nation. Yet even a poor Frenchman had to feel superior to someone. Thus did racism in the modern sense first arise in a ‘democratic’ society, ‘a mass society whose expressed ideals were fraternal and egalitarian’.<sup>34</sup> Around the same time white commoners in colonial America ‘found a shared identity as white men by asserting their superiority defined against Indians and Africans’.<sup>35</sup>

Not unlike the poor Frenchman or the white American commoner, the common Ottoman Muslim felt that he belonged to a political nation in which class differences were mediated by the collective identity that tied him or her to the ruling class. While it was race that became the marker of this collective identity in colonial America, in the eighteenth-century Ottoman empire religion was being assigned that function. The ruling class continued to include many non-Muslims in provincial as well as imperial administration, from *kocabaşıs*, or non-Muslim community leaders, to Phanariot princes who ruled Moldavia and Wallachia.<sup>36</sup> However, Muslims no longer constituted part of the *reaya*, the flock, and had moved up to become citizens of sorts.

It is time to return to another point mentioned earlier. Medieval and early modern identities were multi-faceted, as individuals were able to relate to different groups by evoking a particular facet of their identity. Yet if one of the facets of an individual's identity were to receive more attention than the others, that person might lose touch with some of the collectives he or she had been affiliating with and come to essentialize that one particular facet of his or her identity. The Ottoman empire in the nineteenth century provided ample opportunity for essentializing identities. As the empire could not compete with Russia militarily, and became increasingly subject to European imperialist designs politically, Russians became protectors of Orthodox Christians by the end of the eighteenth century and the French of Catholics later on. As these imperial powers started offering economic advantages to their Ottoman Christian intermediaries whose protectors they had become, many an Ottoman Christian merchant found himself interacting more and more with European Christians and finding new meaning in his Christian identity as a key to economic and political privilege (which could even include citizenship papers). It seemed more *convenient* now to emphasize communal identities to the exclusion of others, as there were socio-economic and political advantages to be gained.

It should not be surprising that the crystallization of a collective identity around the category of Muslim contributed to the alienation of Christian subjects of the Ottoman empire, who were left by themselves in the status of 'flock'. Had the Ottoman empire been located on a continent more or less isolated, like the United States, this alienation could probably have been addressed successfully in the long term, as majority–minority relations are usually subject to continuing negotiations. Yet the Ottomans faced several powerful neighbours, whose interest in competing for the political loyalties of their Christian subjects complicated the course of such negotiations between Muslim rulers and these subjects. It seemed more *convenient* to ally with Russians for independence in Serbia or to secure British help for Greek independence rather than negotiating with Muslim overlords who were having difficulty adjusting themselves to the idea of full-scale equality with their Christian subjects. To put things in perspective, one might consider how long it took white Americans to get used to full-scale equality with Native or African Americans. Such international alliances between some Ottoman Christians and foreign powers, in turn, transformed the loyal Christian subjects of the empire into members of a fifth column in the eyes of many Muslims, who, in turn, started essentializing their Muslim identity. Thus between the beginning of the nineteenth century and that of the twentieth, the diversity of the Ottoman empire was replaced by several nation-states or colonies that became increasingly less diverse during the twentieth century.

In retrospect, it seems that, as long as the most significant marker of difference in Ottoman society was the one between the rulers and the subjects (*reaya*), members of Ottoman communities were able to mediate their communal differences by, on the one hand, forming a wide range of affiliations with members of other communities and, on the other, being reminded continually that, no matter which communal group they belonged to, they were all members of the ruler's flock. Increasing social mobility, coupled with the development of a collective identity that brought the new ruling class together with the Muslim masses out of which they had emerged, destabilized the relations between Ottoman communities. The exploitation of this destabilization by European imperialism led to essentialization of communal identities and the

eventual transformation of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society into much more monolithic nation-states.

## NOTES

- 1 For examples of such treatments, see the works cited in Gradeva 1994: 14, n. 1.
- 2 Anderson [1983] 2006.
- 3 E.g., the essays by Gábor Ágoston (Hungary, chapter 15), Nelida Fuccaro (Kurdistan, chapter 16), Rossitsa Gradeva (Ottoman courts in the Balkans, chapter 4), Eugenia Kermeli (Greece, chapter 24), Tal Shuval (Algiers, chapter 18), Ehud Toledano (the Ottoman Arab provinces, chapter 30), Stefan Winter (Shiites in Syria, chapter 12), and Christine Woodhead (language use, chapter 10).
- 4 Catlos 2001, 2004.
- 5 Catlos 2010: 36. This paper is part of Catlos's work-in-progress, tentatively entitled *Paradoxes of pluralism: ethno-religious diversity and the medieval Mediterranean*.
- 6 Catlos 2010.
- 7 İnalçık 1969–70: 236–7, 247.
- 8 Murphey 1984: 14 (Turkish, p. 35).
- 9 Tezcan 2000.
- 10 For a detailed biography of Eremya Çelebi in English, see Sanjian and Tietze 1981: 7–37. Armeno-Turkish was Turkish in Armenian letters. A similar mixture of languages had earlier occurred in Crimea, where the Armenian diaspora had adopted Kipchak. This they took with them to Podolia, where in 1618 they printed arguably the first book in a Turkic language; see Chirli 2005. The exemplary phrases are from Schütz 1968: 46, 54.
- 11 Bardakjian 2000: 61; Sanjian and Tietze 1981: 35, n. 97.
- 12 Şükri, *Selîmnâme*, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1597–98, f. 276b.
- 13 Kunt 1974.
- 14 Tezcan 2007: 83.
- 15 Kunt 1974: 239.
- 16 Clogg 1992: 13.
- 17 Eremya Çelebi Kömürcüyan 1952: 61.
- 18 Strauss 2002: 200; Synadinos 1996.
- 19 Ivanova 2007: 165; see also Rossitsa Gradeva's essay in this volume, chapter 4.
- 20 Baer 2004.
- 21 Kenanoğlu 2004: 251–66.
- 22 See Eugenia Kermeli's essay in this volume, chapter 24.
- 23 Catlos 2010: 31.
- 24 Catlos 2004: 400, fig. 3.
- 25 Nirenberg 1996.
- 26 Her other son saved himself by converting to Islam and promising to pay their debts to the treasury. He apparently became known as Aksak Mustafa Çavuş and died during the reign of İbrahim (1640–48); Selaniki Mustafa Efendi 1989: II, 854–7; Naima 1864–6: I, 231, 247; the English ambassador Lello's dispatch of 29 March 1600, National Archives, London, SP 97/4, f. 77; on the term '*kiera*', see Mordtmann 1929.
- 27 Tezcan 2010: 65–6.
- 28 See, for instance, such late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century sources as the anonymous *Hırzül-mülük*, in Yücel 1988: 185–6 (facsimile, f. 31b); the anonymous *Kitâb-ı Müstetâb*, *ibid.*: 8 (Ottoman text, p. 15); and *Koçi Beg risalesi* 1939: 24, 38.
- 29 Kinalızade Ali, 1833, book III, 2; cf. a manuscript of the same text in Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hamidiye 626, f. 408a.
- 30 Catlos 2010: 36.
- 31 Tezcan 2010.
- 32 Even in the late seventeenth century, the term had no denominational connotations; see

Meninski 1680: II, c. 2329–30. Cf. Faroqhi 1995c: 404: ‘From the 12th/18th century onwards, the term is increasingly used for the Christian taxpayers only; 13th/19th century population counts distinguish between *re‘āyā* and *Islām*’.

33 Guillaumin 1995: 35.

34 *Ibid.*: 56.

35 Taylor 2001: xiii.

36 Philliou 2009.