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FOUNDING NEW TOWNS AS MEANS OF CONFLICT SOLVING:
THE CASE OF EĞRIDERE PALANKA (KRIVA PALANKA, REP. OF MACEDONIA)

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The theme founding new towns in the Ottoman Balkans is not a totally unexplored field. There are some theories proposed by some of the best known scholars of the past generation, Barkan and Todorov (Barkan 1956, Todorov, Kiel, 2000,²). Especially for Bosnia valuable material has been brought together by the Bosnian scholar Adem Handžić (Handžić, 1978) and some incidental cases - Livno, Ljubinja and Konjic also in Bosnia, Kavalla and Navarino in Greece - have been described by others. Recently Aleksandar Fotić stressed the aspect of well thought-out planning in the development of the great vakfs in cities like Belgrade (Fotić, 2001). Diametrically opposed are the theories of Barkan and Todorov, the former seeing the whole process of urban development in the Balkans as the result of deliberate planning by the Ottoman central government, the latter as the result of a largely spontaneous development of pre-existing settlements. Thus: towns *ex nihilo*, or as a continuous process, building on medieval Balkano-Slavic traditions.

In this short survey we would like to show the emergence, and the reason of it, of the town of Eğridere Palankası, the modern Kriva Palanka, in the north-eastern corner of the present Republic of (Skopje) Macedonia and dedicate it to Heath Lowry, who in his many new publications showed that he 'walked on the same road,' of urban development, albeit in another part of the Balkans than the Slavic world.

As the history, geography and demography of the district of Kriva Palanka are not well known it would be good to offer first a rapid overview of these aspects. The Ottoman Kaza of Eğridere Palankası (Ottoman between 1395 and 1912) comprised as a whole the historical landscape of Slavište. The name of the district is known from the early 11th century onward and was until the 17th century used in the Ottoman records, the *tahrir*- and *cizye* registers. The area is formed by a dendritic river system of small and narrow valleys between the present Macedonian-Bulgarian border at the Devebayır Pass in the east, and the Pass of Stračin in the west. West of the town of Kriva Palanka it forms a narrow basin, which is the core of the district. In the north Slavište is sealed off from the former Ottoman *kaza* of Preševo by the 1700 m high Djerman Mountains and in the south it is bordered by the 2000 m high and heavily wooded Ossogovski Mountains, sealing it off from the *ex-kaza* of Kratovo, the *kaza*-border running over the crest of the mountain range.

The valley floor of the little river Kriva Reka (Eğri Dere in Ottoman) lies at 680 meter above sea level at Kriva Palanka sinking to 540 meter in the west. From east to west the entire old *kaza* measures 35 km, from north to south 20 km. Since olden times one of the

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most important east-west roads of the Balkans, the road from Constantinople via Plovdiv/Filibe – Samokov-Kyustendil to Skopje and further on to Albania, follows the valley of the Kriva Reka.

Written sources about our district are thinly sown. The oldest known mention of Slavište is the chrysobul of the Byzantine Emperor Basil the Bulgarslayer from 1019, who after his destruction of the West-Bulgarian (or Macedonian) Empire of Tsar Samuel reorganized the ecclesiastical organization of the land. (Ivanov, 1931; Gelzer 1902). Another early written source is a document issued in 1321 by the Serbian King Milutin, when he donated a few villages in the district of Slavište to the great monastery of Hilendar on Mount Athos. In March of 1358 the “Sebastokrator” Vlatko, a local feudal lord, and his father Knez Paskhač also donated the small monastery of Psača in Slavište to the great Serbian monastery of Hilendar. The church of Psača, dedicated to St. Nicolas, is still preserved in Psača, together with its highly valuable mural paintings, depicting the Serbian Kings Uroš and Vukašin as well as the founders of the church and their family (Tadić, 1939; Balabanov-Cornakov, 1975; ćurčić, 2010).

A few kilometers above the place where in the 17th century Egridere Palanka was founded stands the majestic Monastery of St. Joakim Ossogovski. According to the Vita of this saint (one of the founding fathers of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church) the monastery was founded during the rule of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Komnenos (1143-1180). A *bullā* from the ruler of the just resurrected Second Bulgarian Empire, Tsar Kaloyan (1196-1207) for the Ossogovski Monastery is preserved until today (Ivanov, 1906, 93). In 1330, before the Battle of Velbužd, the Serbian King Stefan Dečanski prayed in the Ossogovski Monastery to God for his victory against the Bulgarians (and won). In 1463, when Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror was on his way to conquer the Bosnian Kingdom, stayed in the Ossogovski Monastery and was evidently very content with the treatment he received there. The story is mentioned in the “Sarandoporski Kronik,” preserved in the Bosnian National Museum. (original Old Church Slavonic text by Ivanov, 1931, 150). In the oldest preserved Ottoman *tahrir* (BBO, MAD 170) from 1516 we find this monastery with extensive tax facilities, issued by the Conqueror (Original text and English translation in Kiel, 1985).

The 1516 text shows that the monastery in that year had, next to the abbot, 41 monks, mentioned name by name. In the mid-16th century the monastery allowed itself the construction of a small but very carefully built new church, dedication to the Mother of God (Bogoroditsa), rising its high central dome proudly in the air. The famous Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi visited the monastery in 1660, praising the hospitality of the monks and mentions the large numbers of travelers passing by the monastery. Still in 1689 the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III visited Ossogovski, praised its richness and beauty and made a list of all precious objects, and cursed all those who would steal them. (original text by Ivanov, 1931, 149).

In short: Slavište was part of the Bulgarian/Macedonia State until its fall in 1018, was part of the Byzantine Empire until about 1200, and was then for some decades part of the resurrected Bulgarian Empire and after a Byzantine interlude became part of the Serbian Kingdom (after 1345 Empire). After the dismemberment of Tsar Dušan's Empire it was included in the largely autonomous Principedom of the Dejanovici princes, who resided in Velbužd, later known as Kyustendil. In 1395 it finally became Ottoman territory.

The administrative center of Slavište was the castle above the village of Opila, where at the place called "gradište" the ruins can still be recognized (Tomoski, 1976; Mikulčik 1996). To the east of the present Kriva Palanka lies a long and narrow pass road that once was known by the Byzantine-Greek name Saranda- Poron. The Ottomans called the pass "Kırk Geçit" which has the same meaning (forty passes). The otherwise forgotten name lives on in the name of the hamlet of Krklja, six km east of Kriva Palanka.

In 1371 Prince Konstantin Dejanović became Ottoman vassal, serving under Sultan Murad I and Yıldırım Bayezid. After his death in 1395 during the Battle of Rovine in Wallachia, and without a suitable heir, his territory was without upheavals annexed by the Ottomans and became the Sandjak of Kyustendil (from: Kostadin-İli), the "land of Konstantin." Slavište became a *nahiye* of the vast *kaza* of Kyustendil and remained so until the reforms of the Tanzimat (1865). At that date it was elevated to *kaza* of Egridere Palankası and added to the newly formed Vilayet of Kosovo with Üsküp/Skopje as capital. (For the history of the pre-Ottoman principedom see in detail: Matanov, 1996).

The historical settlement pattern of Slavište must largely have come into being in the Slavic middle ages. In the heavily wooded mountain area are anyhow only a few places where permanent human settlement is possible.

For the Sandjak of Kyustendil no Ottoman population- and taxation registers of the 15th century are preserved. Disregarding a fragment of 16 pages only dealing with some villages in the *kazas* Ustrumce/Strumitsa and Tikveš from 879/1475 (ADFE.2) the oldest (completely preserved) register is BOA, MAD 170 from 1517. Another detailed and well preserved register is T.D. 267 from 1550. Both lay unpublished in the Prime Minister's Ottoman Archive (BOA) in Istanbul. The next great source, from 1570/73, is the four volume register preserved in the Title Deed and Cadaster Office in Ankara, (T.K.G.M, Nr. 85, 88, 89 and 90), which is available for research in translation in the Macedonian language, published by the Skopje National Archives of Macedonia. More material, almost undisturbed, is preserved in the sections Kepeci, MAD, and Ceride Odası in the BOA. Next to them there are three registers of the poll tax (Dzizye) of the year 1626, 1642 and 1664/65, kept in the Sofia National Library and all three well published (Grozdanova 2001). A surprisingly rich source for the history of Kriva Palanka is formed by the register of the Extra-Ordinary (Avariz) tax from 1696/97 in the BOA, as MAD-Zeyl 2749, which gives ground to an important correction of the (nationalistic) historiography of the area.

According to the 1570 register the *nahiye* of Slavište was a relatively well populated area with 52 villages with together 1789 Christian, and only nine Muslim households. This is

taken within the borders as they were in 1900. Seven of the Muslim households lived in the village Sveti Petka. The register mentions among the inhabitants an imam, telling us that there must have been a mosque, or at least a mesdjid. The borders of territory in 1570 were slightly different from 1900. German, Luka, Nerav and Ogut in the north of the district belonged in 1570 to the large *kaza* of Vranje ("ivranya"). In the south-west a slice with the important villages of Stračin, Krilatitsa, Odreno, Opila and the small village of Ivankovtsi belonged in 1570 still to Slavište, but were later attached to the *kaza* of Kratovo. In the north German and Nerav remained until 1912 outside our area and belonged to the *kaza* of Preševo, which was formed the 17th century, when the once very big *kaza* of Vranje was divided in several new *kazas* of much smaller size.

The 53 villages of 1570 inside the border of 1900 (but including German and Nerav) had an average population of 34 households per village. In the difficult 17th century, with lower average temperatures, smaller harvests and higher taxes, 16 mostly very small villages, situated on marginal land, disappeared.

Seven of the largest villages, almost all situated along the main east-west transit road, had the status of *derbenci* (guardians the passes) village, enjoyed considerable tax facilities, with its inhabitants having the right to carry arms in exchange for guarding the road. In most of the villages in our area were, moreover, a number of Martolos (from the Greek armatholos/carrying weapons) most probably descendants of the army of Prince Konstantin and his forerunners, who through the centuries kept their status. In 1501 the traveller Felix Petančić mentions in our district the village of "Conopnize" (Konopnitsa) where the inhabitants had to guard the passes. The 1570 *tahrir* describes this village as having 130 households, being the second largest settlement of the entire district (only Petralitsa had eight households more) and notes that it was a *derbenci* village, which inhabitants had sultanic orders from Bayezid II (1481-1512), Selim I (1512-1520), Süleyman (1520-1566) and Selim II (1566-1574) describing its status as *derbenci* villages with its rights and duties. The traveler Cavalli mentions in 1560 in Krklje, at the entrance of the pass a very beautiful caravansaray. Philip Du Fresne Canaye reports in 1570 that the surroundings of this village (Krklje) was poor and was inhabited by Christians (du Fresne, 1897). This information is corroborated with the 1570 registers, which is more detailed. It mentions that not only Konopnitsa but also the villages of Krklja, Petralitsa, Podrži Kon and (H)rankovtsi had the *derbend* status. In the description of the large village of Stračin, just outside our area is noted that it laid "at the road from Constantinople to Üsküp (Skopje and to Bosnia and Hercegovina." In 1615 the Bosnian traveler Jusuf Livnjak mentions in Stračin a large and beautiful caravansaray (Livnjak 1614). However, at a certain stage these institutions proved to be insufficient for the mounting difficulties and finally made the road so unsafe that not even a bird could fly through, "kuş uçmaz" as the sources of the time wrote.

In the first half of the 17th century our district went through a difficult time. The available demographic material points to a considerable decline of the population. Of a sample of 21 Slavište villages we made the population had gone up from 912 households in 1517, to 1061 in 1550, 1189 in 1570 to 1072 in 1611. This decline has to be ascribed to a

combination of factors: the known world-wide lower average temperatures (the “Little Ice Age”) that in mountainous districts has a very negative influence of the agricultural production, to smaller numbers of the average household size, and to increased taxes. For those who are for political reasons not inclined to accept changes on general temperature caused by reduced energy of the sun – especially Marxist historians – it is advisable to have a look at the impressive, world-wide material brought together in the voluminous work of Grove, 1990, “The Little Ice-Age” London, 1990. In our area public security rapidly deteriorated. Growing bands of highway men repeatedly attacked and robbed caravans and finally no bird could fly through (“kuş uçmaz”) as the sources of that time noted (see further on).

In the course of the year the 1634 a revolt broke out in the Slavište region and spread over the entire area. Instead of putting it down with the usual violent means the Governor-General of Rumeli, Bayram Pasha (in charge as Beylerbey of Rumeli since 1633 and Grand Vizier of the Empire between 1635 and ‘38) went at the root of the problem, which was social-economic. By his biographers he is described as a very serious, thoughtful and authoritarian. On the slight, flat topped, elevation on the southern bank of the Kriva Reka/Eğridere rivulet, on a previously uninhabited place near the dangerous Sarandaporon pass, he had a castle constructed with high stone walls. Next to that he erected a Friday mosque, a large caravansaray, and a munificent soup kitchen (imaret) where travelers were lodged and given to eat at the expense of the foundation (for Imaret system see i.a. Neumann and Singer (ed.) Feeding People, Feeding Empire, A Muslim garrison was placed in the castle, but also a large group of Christian auxiliaries, the Martolosan with a fixed sold. Land- and jobless ex-rebels were settled in the new town by the Vizier, where they found work. All were made responsible for the security in town and region.

Thus the always useful method “with thieves one catches thieves” was also applied here. The story is told not in the Ottoman chronicles but in a long Ottoman inscription (6 distichons) once placed over the entrance of the caravansaray. It notes that the problems in the area were solved “without fight and violence” (bî darb u bî-harb[ü] cidâl) and “with thoughtful managements he removed the fighters that had been led astray.” Among the measures taken are mentioned “the construction of a Friday Mosque, an Inn for Caravans and a Castle.” In original text:

Cum'a ve hân ve hisar ihdaz itmâm edüp
Hüsn-i tedbîrle ref' eyledi asâkir-i kavm-dâl

It is also mentioned in the text that previously it had not been possible to come through the very narrow passes without bloody fights (Kahraman demirci mürur etmezdi andan bî-kitâl).The inscription dates from 1043 of the Muslim calendar, or 8 July 1633 - 26 June 1634 A.D. When in the 1920s the caravansaray was demolished its inscription was kept in the town hall of Kriva Palanka, where it was seen by the great Bulgarian historian Jordan Ivanov, and published by him in Bulgarian (an incomplete) translation and a photo in his

important work of 1931. Ivanov immediately understood the uniqueness of this inscription and in the translation stressed the fact that the revolt was quenched “without fight and destruction” (*bez boy i razvoy*). The so important inscription is now to be seen in the Museum of Macedonian History in Skopje.

In the 1660, 25 years after the foundation of the new town, Evliya Çelebi traveled through Egridere Palankası where he saw three mosques, six mesjids, 50 houses in the Palanka and 800 houses in the open settlement (*varoš*). This gives about 4000 inhabitants. Evliya prizes in particular the munificent foundation of Bayram Pasha and could establish that many inhabitants of the town worked as black smith or were otherwise engaged in the production of metal work. The latter aspect is partly confirmed by a Poll Tax Register from 1664/65 (Sofia Nat Bibl. F.131A) where the inhabitants of six villages in the area (Ginofçe, Hrankovtsi, Otošnitsa, Petralits, Psaça and Trnovçe) with together 299 households, were inscribed as “me'adin” or ma'denci/miners. The well-known Ottoman scholar, historian and geographer Hadschi Chalfa/Katip Çelebi (d.1657) also mention metallurgy in the Egridere district, as did Marin Caboga from Dubrovnik in 1706 and the French geographer Ami Boué in 1836. Caboga adds that that the iron from the mines of Kriva Palanka and Samokov was “of the finest quality of the entire Orient” (Caboga 1898).

According to the Macedonian expert of mining history Apostol Keramitčiev the iron mines of Slavište had already been used by the Romans. The mines fell in disuse in the first half of the 7th century due to the invasions of the Slavic tribes in that time. They were only revived in the first half of the 17th century by the Turks, most probably under Sultan Murad IV (1623-1640) as Keremitičiev thought. This was especially at the large group of mines in the eastern part of Slavište, around the villages Kostur, Krklje and Duračka Reka, where Keramitčiev conducted extensive field work. This field work showed that the mines were continuously in use from about 1600 to the end of the 19th century (Keramitčiev, 1975).

If the revival of mining and metallurgy in Slavište was directly organized by Bayram Pasha is not sure. The least that can be said is that the reopening of the mines is closely connected with the restored law and order in the district through the measures taken by the Vizier. A look at our maps makes directly visible that in the *tahrirs* of 1516, 1550 and 1570 the entire south-eastern corner of the district was totally devoid of human settlement, but in the 19th century had no less than nine villages founded after 1570, of which Kostur and Duračka Reka were the most important mining villages.

In this context it is interesting to recall the words of Evliya Çelebi, who remarked that before the building of Eđri Palanka the district was made very unsafe by robber bands, so unsafe that no traveler could come though and that therefore the iron mines were deserted (mu'attal). In Evliya's words the place where the castle was built was "dangerous and frightful place, a very narrow and winding place where Unbelieving highway man it was easy to lay in ambush and make it impossible to pass through." As said before the inscription of the caravansaray also hints to this direction. Evliya notes that the castle was situated dictly on the river bank and was:

"a rectangular building with a circumference of 800 paces and built of very hard stone. The castle has a gate on the southern side and in it there is a ammunition depot, a store for cereals, a garrison of 200 men under command of a Dizdar, and is armed with 10 light cannon. It is a small castle, having, however, very high walls with in front of it a ditch (hendek) cut out of the rock."

From Evliya's description, and from the two still standing parts of wall can be seen that the *palanka* was not thought to be attacked by a regular army using heavy siege guns, but against lightly armed irregulars of insurrectionists.

For this function the building was wholly sufficient. It has to be remarked that the word "palanka" usually is translated as being a small redoubt built of earth and strengthened with a palisade of wood. In Ottoman practice, however, it was also used for small, stone built fortifications as can be seen in the many Ottoman building accounts of this kind of forts, and in the old place names.

Bela Palanka on the great highway between Niš and Sofia and in open terrain is a case in point. Here more than half of a rectangular and relatively small artillery fort (95x140 m), strengthened with polygonal bastions is still standing. It might be added that the fort of Bela (White) Palanka is also a creation of Bayram Pasha from the years he was in charge as Beylerbey of Rumeli, and that outside it a vast caravansay was built, like at Kriva Palanka. In contrast to Kriva Palanka the fort on the Niš-Sofia road had a Roman forerunner (Mišković, 1889) Parts of it were excavated in recent years, some hundreds of meters south-east of the Ottoman work. Another excellent example of a solid stone-built artillery fort is the fort of Sigri, commanding the homonymous Bay on the island of Mitylini/Lesbos, built in the second half of the 18th century under the Sultans Osman III and Mustafa III (1756-1774). The preserved building accounts call it repeatedly "Palanka" and nothing else (Kiel-Karidis 2000).

Like Kriva Palanka a new, small and entirely Muslim-Turkish town was planned and built near it, now a nice holiday resort. Palanka, mosque, hamam and many *çeşmes* adorned with Ottoman inscriptions, are still to be seen in Sigri.

In the year 1689, during the 1683-1699 war against a Christian coalition, the Habsburg army penetrated deep into Ottoman territory, exciting the local Christian population to a revolt against the Ottomans (the so-called Karpoš Uprising). A raid of a Habsburg army detachment, mostly composed of Hungarians and Croats, disturbed the peaceful development of Eğridere Palanka district. This army group pushed on to the Sanjak capital Kyustendil, committed a gruesome massacre among the Muslim population but then retreated (for Ottoman Kyustendil see: Kiel, 1996). The revolt was suppressed in the usual way. What had happened in Eğridere Palanka is not recorded.

Ivanov (1906) used an anonymous Russian travel account from 1692 which described Eğri Palanka as a "small village inhabited with Muslims" and suggests, without saying it with so many words, that the small village was the result of a brutal suppression of the revolt, with great destruction. In 1922 Kosta Kostić repeats this statement almost automatically, from where it entered later popular descriptions (Kostić, 1922). That we are here confronted with a nasty mistake, one swapped with the other, can be shown with help of a hitherto unknown source, the Register of the Avariz Tax from 1107 (1696/97), preserved in the Istanbul Ottoman Archives. (MAD-Zeyl 2749). It gives a surprising picture of Kriva Palanka almost immediately after the Habsburg invasion. This register lists the entire male population of Eğridere Palanka, the military and the civil population. We find 70 soldiers of the garrison mentioned with name and patronym, 10 servants of the mosques, 15 large and small members of the cavalry (za'ims and sipahi's), 15 Asabs with sold, and 15 horsemen (Farisân), altogether a force of 120 men, all Muslims and sons of Muslims. The surprise is formed by the Christian population of the town. There were now 147 households living in the Varoš and also mentioned name by name. Next to them 200 other Christians also live in the varoš. They were Derbendjis, the Christian para-military force. Inside the fortress, but also partly outside it in the varoš were three other groups of Christian auxiliaries, one group of 156 men Martolos, one group of 128 of them and a group of 41 "New Martolos" of the castle, most probably recruited after the events of 1689. Altogether we have 797 men, mostly heads of households, which goes rather well with Evlya Çelebis numbers. These numbers lead to the surprising conclusion that, Derbendjis included, 81% of the total military force of Eğridere Palanka consisted of local Christians. Even if we subtract the Derbendjis there is nevertheless a majority of 72 %. *What this tells us about the living together of two separate religious communities is easy to guess.*

The Register MAD-Zeil 2747as Register MAD-Zeyl 2749 contains as a sort of appendix the full copy of the Sultanlic order from 1634 to build on a suitable site at the Eğridere rivulet a small Palanka and appoint peasants from the villages of the district as Derbendjis or as Martolos and settle then in the new town. It is so-to-say the "birth certificate" of Kriva Palanka.

Between 1847 and '51 the almost seven centuries old old monastery church of Jovan Ossogovski was rebuilt in great style sponsored by the guilds of Kriva Palanka. Hadži Stefan Beglikçi from Kriva Palanka was the most important of them. He was an influential man who as great contractor of sheep to Istanbul (celep) enjoyed important privileges and had come

to great wealth. Most of the buildings of the monastery, the konak (house of the Abbot), monk's cells, service building and stables are also from these same years. (Instead of lodging and feeding travelers munificently the visitor of today has to pay horrendous sums, the venerable institution being transformed into a *deluxe* hotel).

The Salnâme of the short-living Eyalet of Prizren of 1291 (1874) contains a bit of useful some information on how the little town had fared in the Late-Ottoman period. It now was the administrative centre of a *kaza*, containing 67 villages. This means that during the vilayet reform of 1864 the old *nahiye* of Slavište was considerably enlarged and now contained parts of districts that had a sizeable Muslim population. As after the dissolution of the Vilayet of Prizren the situation changed again the population numbers of 1874 are not relevant here. In the town of Palanka the source mentions two mosques, a hamam, three primary schools (mektep) for Muslim children and five for Christians. In the town were also five dervish convents (tekke/zaviye), a Clock Tower (symbol of modernity), five inns and the same number of wine houses.

In the course of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877/78 and after it many Muslims fled from the now independent Christian state of Bulgaria to Eğridere Palanka, whereas a part of the Christian population moved in the opposite direction. We have to remind that from the year 1000 until 1945 the people of this part of the Balkans called themselves Bulgarians and only after 1945 were to discover that they constituted a separate nation of their own, Macedonians. Shortly before 1900 the Bulgarian scholar Vasil Kănčov found a large Muslim majority in the town. From the 4370 inhabitants 2500 were Muslims, next to 1500 Christian Bulgarians, 350 Gypsies and 20 Vlachs. Kănčov also noted that in the last ten years the town had seen a rapid development.

In the last quarter of the 19th century the once so important iron mining came to an end. The historian of mining in this area, Keremitčiev (1975) ascribed this to the Russo-Turkish War that also had its repercussions in Kriva Palanka. The Salnâme of the Kosovo Vilayet of 1314/1896 has another reason: "When before 20-25 years the horse shoes of Palanka were famous and could be exported for 10000 Lira per year, now, under influence of European economic competition, this branch went totally down" (Aganoğlu, 2000, S.153). Maybe the one as well as the other contributed to the disappearance of mining in this district.

In and immediately after 1912, after the conquest of a slice of Macedonia by the Serbs (in the literature called "liberation"), we find again a different picture. With the horrors of the violent expulsion of their brethren from territories conquered by the Serbs in 1878 (Niš, Pirot, Preševo and Vranje) just north of our district in fresh in memory almost all the Muslims of Palanka fled southward or emigrated shortly afterwards. The little town collapsed and did not recover in the years between the two World Wars. This was caused by the ruthless Serbian policy of those years to make Serbs of the local Christians much against their will. They settled in the nearby Bulgaria with a population of the same stock as they were.

In 1921 Kriva Palanka had only 2148 inhabitants, in 1953, more than 30 years later, 2.539. Only after the collapse of communist rule and the renewed opening of the borders, bringing back the old transit function of the district the economy grew again. Another result of the modern times is the desertion and complete disappearance of a score of small mountain villages, their inhabitants finding jobs and a better life in the economic and cultural capital, the metropolis of Macedonia, Škopje, that grew from 30 – 40000 inhabitants to half a million.

In the center of Kriva Palanka two large stretches of the walls of the castle of 1634, and 19th century Ottoman town hall (Konak) remain preserved and in 2006 the old inhabitants still vividly remembered the place where the great mosque and *hamam* once stood.

Habsburg invasion.

On the pages 171 – 200 this register lists the entire adult male population of Eğridere Palanka, the military and the civilians. We find 70 soldiers of the garrison having a timar to live from, or were paid with sold (bâ 'ulufe), all mentioned with name and patronym, 9 servants of the great mosque, 15 large and small members of the cavalry (za'ims and sipahis), 15 Azabs with sold, and 15 horsemen (Farisân) with 'ulufe, altogether a force of 124 men, all Muslims and sons of Muslims. The surprise is formed by the Christian population of the town. There were 147 civil Christian households living in the Varoš, also mentioned name by name. In the mining villages of the districts lived 109 ma'denciyan (or: meda'in), miners, who had a very privileged status but did not belong to the military. Inside the fortress, but also partly outside it in the villages around the fort were two other groups of Christian auxiliaries, the "martolozan-i kal'e-i Egridere" (Martoloz coming from the Greek "armatholos," weapon-bearer) a group of 162 men, and a group of 131 men extra. Altogether we have 460 men, mostly heads of households, which goes rather well with Evliya Çelebi's numbers. These numbers lead to the surprising conclusion that, derbendjis included, 79% of the total military force of Egridere Palanka consisted of local Christians. In 1648 by Sultanic order, the number of derbendjis was augmented to 200 men living in the town of Egridere, thus bringing the Christian part of the military machinery of Egri Palanka to 83% Christians. *What this tells us about the living together of two separate religious communities is easy to guess.*

The Register MAD 2740 contains as a sort of appendix the full copy of the Sultanic order from 1634 to build on a suitable site at the Egridere rivulet a small Palanka and appoint peasants from the villages of the district as derbendjis or as martolos and settle them in the new town. It is, so-to-say, the "birth certificate" of Kriva Palanka.

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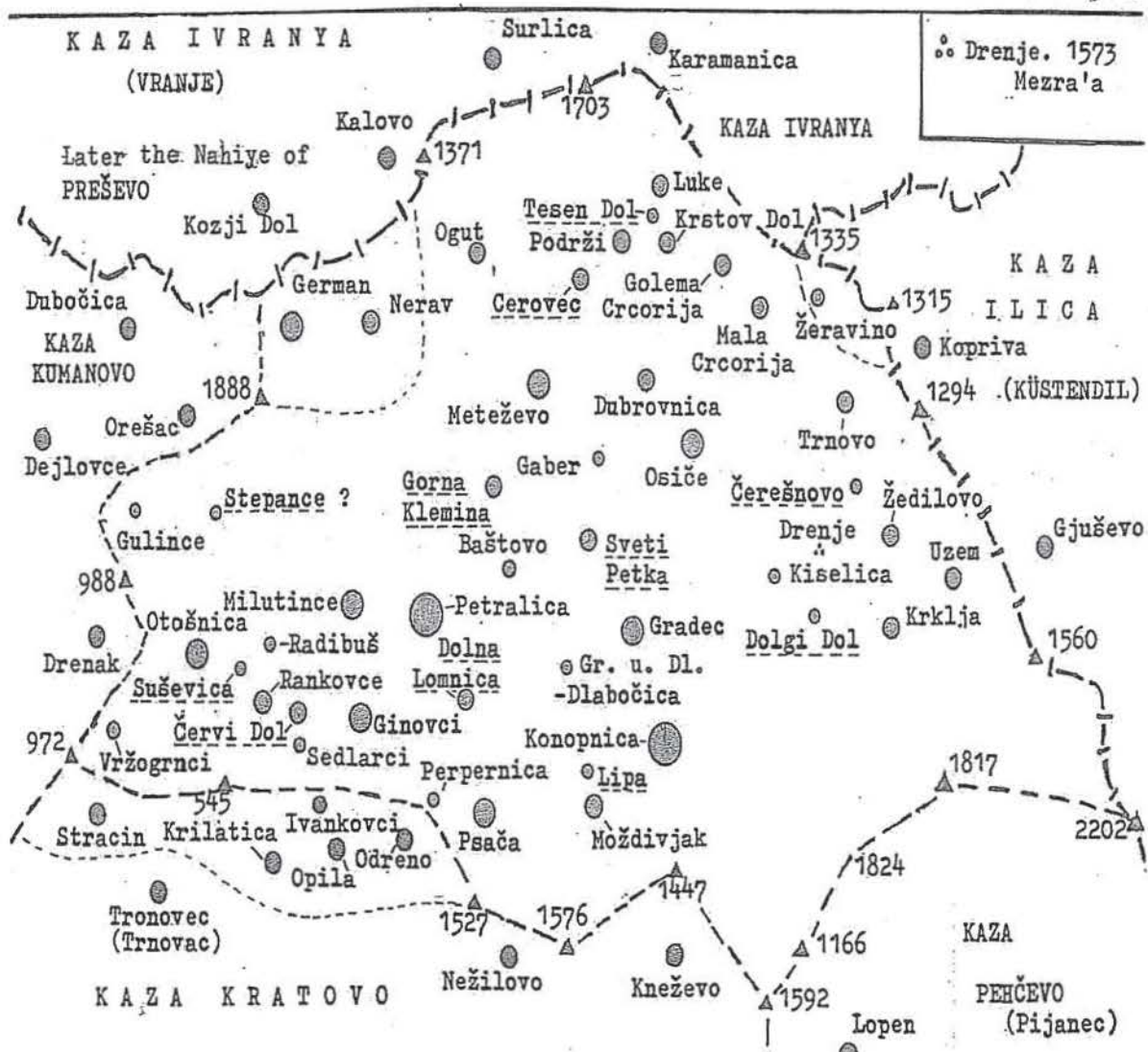


The rivulet Egridere (Kriva Reka) just before entering the town of Kriva Palanka.



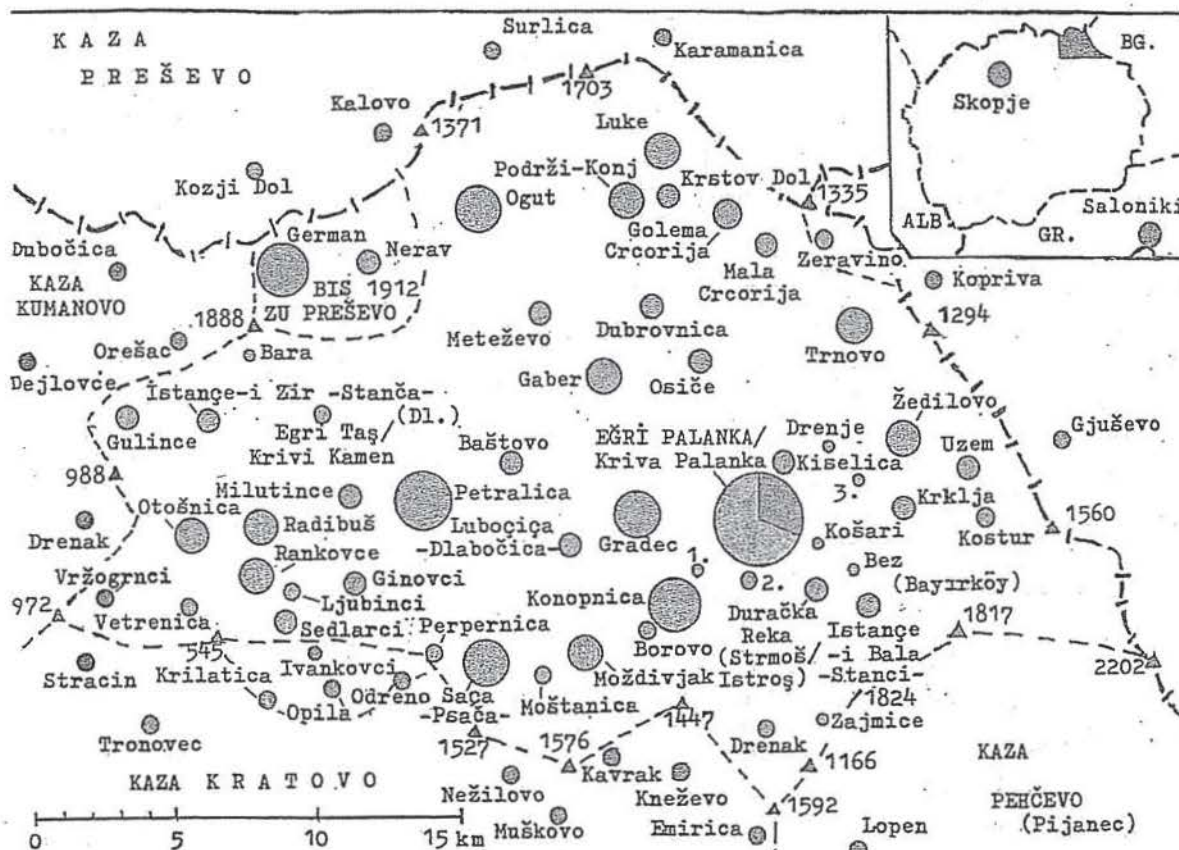
The lower part of the building inscription of the (demolished) caravansaray of Bayram Pasha in Kriva Palanka, giving the date of construction - 1043/1633-34 - in Arabic numbers and as chronogram (with kind permission of the Museum of National History, Skopje).

The Nahiye of Eğridere (Slavište) in the year 1570

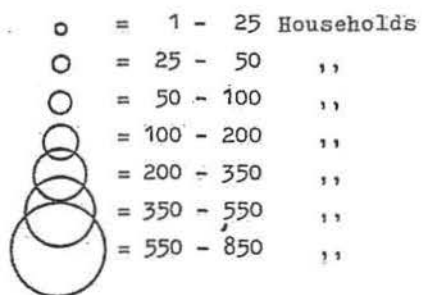


Map of the nahiye of Slavishte in 1570 based on the tahrir defter of Kyustendil.

The Kaza of Egridere Palankası (Kriva Palanka) in 1900



Map of the Kaza of Egri Palanka in 1900, based on the statistics of Vassil Kančov.



● = Muslim Households
 ○ = Christian ,,
 Settlement size and religion after the 1570 Tahrir and after Kančov (Sofia 1900) for 1900

(Dl.)	Dolna/Dolno
Golema Crchorija,	Osm.: Curcurye-i Bala
Mala Crchorija,	Osm.: Curcurya-i Zir
-----	= Border of Kaza
- - - -	= Border of Kaza, later of State
▲	= Mountain, with height in meters

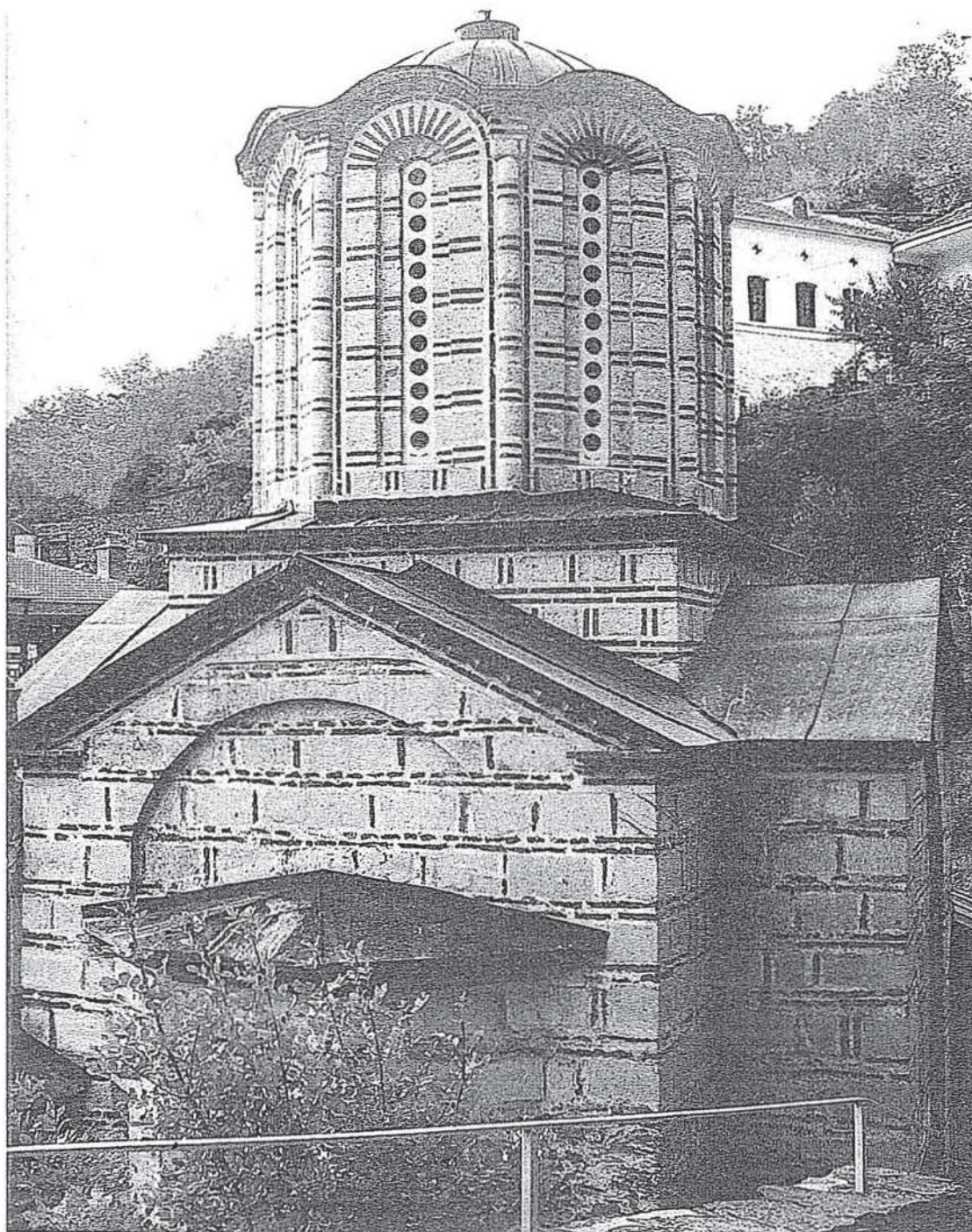
Four very small villages in 1570 with no indication where they have been are not indicated on the map

Seven small villages on our 1900 map are no longer on the Yugoslavian maps and no more mentioned in the official lists of 1985.

They were either deserted or united with larger settlements



Main Church of the Monastery of Joakim Ossogovski outside Kriva Palanka, rebuilt in 1847-'51. The fresco decorations of the interior of the church were made by Stanislav Dospevski, one of the most famous (and expensive!) painters of 19th century Bulgaria.



Monastery of Joakim Ossogovski, the church of the H. Mother of God (Bogoroditsa), mid-16th century

Handwritten header in Ottoman Turkish script, likely identifying the document as a birth certificate from Kriva Palanka.

Main body of handwritten Ottoman Turkish text, detailing the birth certificate information for Kriva Palanka.

Handwritten signature or stamp at the bottom left of the document.

BOA. MAD 2740: P. 196: The "Birth-Certificate" of Kriva Palanka from zi'l-kade 1043 (May 1634).

The facsimile of the 1634 "Birth-Certificate of Kriva Palanka" is with kind permission of the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul.