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Aqua vitae – Notes on Geographies of Alcohol Production and Consumption in the Ottoman Balkans[*1]

Abstract: The paper addresses the beginning of brandy distillation in the Ottoman Balkan, the transfer of technology, commerce and taxation, as well as patterns of consumption. Those patterns include rules of alcohol production, distribution and use according to religion, class and gender, i.e. restrictions and their transgressions. Linguistic, documentary and narrative sources are deployed in building a multifaceted picture. Production of various spirits, foremost plum brandy in the Ottoman Balkans, and the usage of alcohol drinks could be viewed as an area where private and public, official and clandestine, permitted and forbidden mixed and coexisted, and influenced Ottoman political and religious system.

Keywords: brandy; *šljivovica*; distillation; trade; Ottoman Empire; 16th to 19th centuries

Introduction

Several years ago, while collecting data on climate change in Ottoman Bosnia and Serbia during the 'Little Ice Age' (LIA) from 16th to 19th centuries, I came across a plethora of evidence regarding wine and alcohol consumption,

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My gratitude goes to my dear colleague and friend Citlali Cortés Montano (PhD in Forest Sciences, now at the German Development Bank, KfW, responsible for biodiversity and forestry programs in the Republic of Mexico), who commented and edited this text more than thoroughly, and also to Prof. Bojan Žikić (Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Philosophy), who helped me to clarify the key points.

which I could not include at the risk of making a long essay even longer. As I show in that paper, the decline of viticulture in 16th century Ottoman Bosnia was the result of complex synergies between climate and production system changes, instead of the commonly accepted view that this was exclusively due to Islamization. These synergies include the changes brought by the LIA, which resulted in colder and wetter conditions unsuitable for winegrowing, as well as the migration of the skilled labor force engaged in viticulture. Furthermore, the general insecurity brought onto rural populations by frequent war campaigns promoted nomadic living, including shifts to animal husbandry and itinerant trade. In turn, this opened the space for more extensive plum cultivation, since the European plum (*Prunus domestica*) is a more climate resistant crop that can be managed without particular skills, unlike grapes. Prunes were also a valuable export item, and they increased the incomes of farmers, which allowed to make-up for the shortage of labor and the colder/wetter climate. Lastly, but not least importantly, the alcoholic drink derived from plums—*šljivovica* brandy (*arak, rakija, Brandtwein*)—is less prone to decomposition in barrels than wine, easier to produce, transport and export, and has a higher intoxication impact as well as numerous attributed medical or healing effects (Mrgić 2011, 613–637; ead. 2013, 49ff).

This text discusses some findings on the geography and culture of intoxication in the Ottoman Balkans, proposing an alternative explanation to the traditional interpretation that attributes these changes to the inclusion of this territory into the Muslim Empire. An excellent study on religious and legal aspects, written by Rudi Matthee, scrutinizes Sharia Law enforcement in periods of strict obedience during puritanical regimes, and more tolerant epochs (Matthee 2014, 100–125).

Personally, I'm more interested in knowledge transfers of distillation processes, the attributes of male or female domains of the production and consumption, and the victorious rise of plum brandy—*šljivovica* —over just a few centuries, as a favorite and „traditional" drink of all nations and cultures in the Ottoman Balkans. The only thing that could be positively ascertained is the existence of blurred lines between the well-known religious prohibition of wine and brandy to Muslims and their actual behavior, as recorded by numerous foreign travelers, Muslim chroniclers. and archival documents. However, these blurred visions of „insiders" and „outsiders" must be compared to their own beliefs and standards, placing them within the frame of changing social and cultural environment of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th-19th centuries.

These issues necessarily lead towards a more anthropological approach, relying on the „thin red line" of the existence of intoxicating beverages in human civilization from its early onset. Liquids that altered the feelings and behavior of

people, including fermented beverages, were consumed in „rites de passage"— religious and transitional rituals — marking one's coming of age during public and private festivals, and were also known to provide medicinal and psychological relief. The consumption of certain food and drinks in compliance with the norms of social groups allows individual acceptance; but in reverse manner, the group imposes the type of intoxicant, time of ingestion, quantity, as well as other restrictions — such as taboos — along with penalties for disobedience. Another function of alcohol is to act as a „social lubricant", softening ego boundaries, encouraging camaraderie and conviviality. It has the „power" to build and strengthen interpersonal bonds among a group of people, first and foremost males. Only in the course of the 20th century, women were selectively given permission to join social gatherings in taverns, unchaperoned even, to enjoy food and drinks — even though this access was and still is restricted in some cultures to certain places and curfews. As much as „national" cuisines, alcoholic beverages are an integral part of socio-cultural identities (Douglas 1987; Morris 1988; Dietler 2006, 229–249; Hanson 2013). This was observed and recorded in the essay by Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern, following her nearly 30 years of fieldwork in Serbia (Kerewsky-Halpern 1985, 481–494).

Words and Beyond

Water (Serb./Croat. *voda*) is essential for human survival and is the drink of choice four our species; daily intakes depend on its availability, associated with the natural environment and local/regional climate. Very early on, however, humans discovered that the consumption of certain drinks, plants, and other organisms such as fungi, had healing powers and in some instances the capacity to alter the state of human bodies and minds; it is thus believed that the „recreational" use of these substances ran parallel to their application in medicine/healing. Hence, linguistic differences were made to denominate drinking water that was used to quench thirst from those liquids with healing powers, such as wine and other fermented beverages.

Mead, fermented honey water—*medovina* (*medone*)—was among the earliest libations to be produced by Indo-Europeans. With the onset of agricultural intensification, beer (*pivo*) was produced across the Middle East, ancient Egypt and Europe. Another fermented drink brought to the Balkans by Slavic tribes was *olovina*, made from fermented millet and oats, which was made and drank in some parts of Serbia until the late 19th century. There is evidence that supports the large scale production of beer on peasant households during the Middle Ages: in spacious estates of Serbian Orthodox monasteries, during the 13th and 14th centuries, peasants malted barley and hops as part of their labor services.

This tradition was preserved until the onset of proto-industrial production of beer, as early as the 18th century, but gained importance during the 19th century (Vlaić-Popović 1997, 163–169; Novaković 1911, 151–166).

With the advent of Christianization in the Balkans, wine (*vino*) was the only allowed ritual beverage. Grape-growing was spread from Adriatic towns and Byzantine territories in the south of the Balkan Peninsula, and by the end of the 14th century, vineyards existed in the northern region of Posavina and along the Danube shores (Blagojević 2004[2], 106–131). The wine from the environs of Smederevo, the capital of the Serbian Despotate conquered in 1459, had an ascertained geographical origin (*terroir,* in French), and was recognized as such in 1843 in the market place in Belgrade, along with the wine from Krajina (Timok region, eastern Serbia), and Sremski Karlovac (Karlowitz) (Jovanović et al. 2004, 289–290).

The words *alcohol, arak, raki*, and the vessels for distilling process—*alambic* and *kazan*—come from Arabic territories, where distilling was used for preparation of pharmaceutical and medicinal compounds. It is believed that this art was spread through extensive Mediterranean trade and cultural ties; the medical school of Salerno in Southern Italy introduced it and promoted it further in the 11th and 12th centuries. Distilled liquor, originally derived exclusively from wine, was called *aqua ardens* („fiery water") or *aqua vitae* („water of life"), since it gave the body a sense of warmth, of better blood circulation and better digestion, while it uplifted the general mood. „Burnt wine" was named *Brandtwein* in German and became known as brandy in English. Alchemists kept the secret of its production, which was very expensive at first, and small quantities were procured for hospitals, monks, and court apothecaries. Several manuscripts on distilling technology appeared, praising the almost magical effects of this „elixir of youth", circulating through European networks of monastic scriptoriums and universities. By the 14th century, it became an industry in Italian towns, which specialized in producing sweetened liquor, as well as varieties with different herbs and spices, spreading its use to French and German lands (Austin 1985; Nummedal 2007, 53–54, *passim*). German towns were among the first communities to issue decrees, in the 15th century, against the excessive use of „corrupted wine" (brandy), which caused „good citizens" to behave badly (Tlusty 2001). This, along with description of other „vices" and moral corruption, was mocked in the best-selling satirical book of that time – Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* („Ship of Fools", 1494)—in which the author ridiculed alchemists who, in their pursuit of making gold, drank alcohol and wasted all their fortunes.

Figure 1: Alchemists in the midst of distilling
– Sebastian Brandt, *Narrenschiff* (1494)[2]

Figure 2: Housewife in her home distillery – von Hohberg, *Georgica curiosa* (1682)

[2] Page 279 – http://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/11823/279/1/.

However, in Germanic regions, women also distilled alcoholic beverages, according to didactical treatises on household management that indicate that this chore was taken on by females in order to make the medicinal compounds needed to maintain their family's health (Figure2: von Hohberg 1682; Rankin 2008, 55–76).[3] On the contrary, testimonies that include contemporary accounts from the Balkans, point at evidence that suggests that distilling was traditionally a man's job. They would handle the copper *kazan,* supervising the dripping of the precious liquor, single-handedly or in groups, as Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern recorded. The male domain also included illegal production and distribution, as contraband and smuggling was under their control. Anecdotal accounts are found in famous essays by Mihailo Petrović-Alas on Danube fishermen (*alasi*) drinking *šnjapa* (Germ. *Schnapps*), who took their boats and frequented their *mehane*s in Dorćol *yalia* at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. *Schnapps* production and commercialization (legal and illegal) was an ongoing practice in Belgrade and its environs along the border with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to the extent that peasants from the Borča district, highly skilled at „moonshine" making, ventured to the USA during the prohibition times (*suvi režim,* „dry regime") in the early 20th century, and transferred their knowledge to bootleggers on that side of the Atlantic (Petrović 1998, 112–113).

As Fernand Braudel remarked, a „revolution took place" in Europe at the turn of the 17th century, as distillation technologies became more widespread, increasing the varieties of alcoholic beverages distilled from wine, grains, or sugar, which further influenced the patterns of consumption and thus triggered the onset of alcoholism: „The sixteenth century created it (alcohol); the seventeenth century consolidated it; the eighteenth century popularized it." Decreased wine production, especially of high-quality wines, due to the climate changes brought on by the „Little Ice Age," opened up spaces in markets for beer, brandy, vodka, rum, and gin, as well as for fortified wines which could endure overseas transportation; meanwhile, low-quality wines were distilled in order to prevent their waste if they turned to vinegar. The initiative of capital investments into technology is attributed to the newly liberated and rich Dutch communes (Braudel 1981, 241–248; Unwin 1996, 203–206ff; Landsteiner 2004, 266–284; Mrgić 2011, 613–637). Numerous types of wine, fortified wines and alcoholic drinks are methodically listed in the compendium of Zaharija Orfelin (1726–1785), in his book of 1783, „Iskusni podrumar" (*The Experienced Wine Cellar Owner*) (Orfelin 1783; Mrgić 2015, 17).

One may dwell also on the origin and location of drinking places, from Pan-Slavic to Turkish loanwords; following is a selection of them. The use of

[3] Wolfgang Helmhardt von Hohberg, *Georgica curiosa*, 1682. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hohberg_Georgica_Destillation.jpg.

the word *gostionica* (guesthouse, tavern) can be confirmed since the 16th century, though *stanjani* (*albergi*) were obligated to accommodate all visitors, travelers and merchants according to the Tsar Dušan's Law Book from the mid-14th century (Petrović 1999, 699). *Krčma* is another old Slavic word denominating a tavern in the city, while the verb *krčmiti* indicated a retail sale, and the same word in noun form had both genders—*krčmar, krčmarica*—attesting to the existence of female bartenders and inn-keepers, not only in traditional folk songs, but also in documents of the Adriatic communes, especially in Dubrovnik (Skok 1971, vol. 1, 595–96; vol. 2, 187; Stefanović Karadžić 1845; Fostikov 2004, 323–366; Ravančić 1998, 33–44; id. 2000, 53–64).[4] Until the mid-16th century, taverns (*kabaki, korchmy*) in Eastern Europe are scarcely mentioned in preserved documents of the Russian Empire, but afterwards, the government established a monopoly on all alcohol production—including *vodka*, its trade and distribution, which resulted in a great source of revenue (Bushkovitch 1978, 390–391ff).

With the Ottoman rule, new words for drinking places emerged: „kahvehane"> *kafana*, with no liquor consumption, contrary to „meyhane"> „wine house", *mehana*. The first one was reserved for places where coffee and tobacco was consumed, of which many were built throughout Ottoman Belgrade after 1739 (Tričković 1973, 73ff; Fotić 2005, 27–71).[5] Meyhanes, to the contrary, were restricted to non-Muslim quarters, and in times of puritanical religious control, they were closely monitored for visitors; yet again, this division was blurred in modern times. Starting in the second half of the 19th century, as Vladimir Jovanović elaborated, the Serbian Principality was interested in classifying and ranking the different types of taverns by location, physical infrastructure, hygiene, wine and food menus, and accommodation facilities (V. Jovanović 2006, 567–590; M. Jovanović 2009, 57–68). *Bekrija* is a widespread Balkan Turkism of vague origins that designates a male with a flamboyant character, idle and prone to excessive drinking in the odd hours (Loma 2008, 69–70). *Birt*, *birtija*, and *bircuz* came from the German words *Wirt* and *Wirshaus*, and were equally widespread accross southeastern Europe as loanwords, used to designate an inn, and inn-keeper, and in the female form, an inn-keeper's wife. For example, the use of the word *бирцаоуз* is preserved in one complaint by villagers in the vicinity of Osijek, dating from 1735, though the document presents the usage of all terms: *kafana, mehana,* and *bircuz,* the latter two as synonyms (Stefanović 1818, 32; Grujić 1913, 237, 239).

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[4] Cf. verses: *Zaludu ti vino i rakija, kad ne imaš krčmarice mlade, da nam služi vino i rakiju* – „Porča od Avale i Zmajognjeni Vuk", in V. Stefanović Karadžić, *Srpske narodne pjesme* II, Beč 1845, digital: https://www.rastko.rs/knjizevnost/usmena/vkaradzic-pesme_II.html#_Toc494261538 (November 16, 2016).

[5] The state revenue from coffee mills (*tahmis*) in Belgrade was one fifth of the total income.

By order of the State

Evidence on wine and brandy production, consumption, and trade by the Ottomans shows an elaborate taxation system for wine, which represented a significant source of revenue for the Ottoman treasury. Muslim owners of vineyards paid *resm-i dönüm*, while Christians and other non-Muslims paid *şira* tithe (*öşr-i şira*), as 1/10 of the production of non-fermented „grape juice" from winegrowing households (*hane*s or taxpaying units). *Resm-i fuçi* was a tax on wine barrels; *resm-i avenik* was a tax on vineyards outside one's village. The term *monopoliye* originated from the feudal lord's right (*gospoština*) to sell wine during several months per year, and *bac*—the usual market dues. It was usual to include *bac* on „domestic" wine selling in a town's market according to its *kanun*, and separately, to double the tax on „imported wine". In the case of Banja Luka, the difference was expressed so that the „local *meyhanci*s" were taxed with 4 akçes per load [of wine], and imported wine—with 4 akçes per load. Meanwhile, brandy was less taxed, and easier to produce and sell illegaly, which is perhaps one of the reasons behind the „success" of brandy consumption. Early Ottoman census records for Belgrade show that in 1536 there was only one *kazan* or oven maker, but by 1560, there were eight *kazanci*s. Even though their products were not limited to distilling equipment, since they produced numerous copper and tin household and industrial vessels for cooking and baking, this record could be interpreted as a proxy for the production of equipment destined for liquor production (Šabanović 1964, 271, 438–440; Bojanić 1974; ead.1982–83, 117–127; Kreševljaković 1991, 304–305; Kelemen 2010, 269–272).

Problems arose when the Muslim population was caught visiting and drinking „res prohibita" in public. A note dated in 1536 resulted in an ordinance from the sancak-bey to prohibit the building of wooden houses by infidels (*kâfir*) outside the *varoş* of Belgrade, to serve for *meyhanecilik* (Šabanović 1964, 273–274). Passing through Serbia in 1555, Bousbecq wrote: „After Semendria [...] the Rascians begin, and occupy the land as far as the river Drave. They are great drinkers, and are considered treacherous." This imperial ambassador had previously noticed that despite the prohibition of alcohol consumption for Turks, „a good many Turks were drawn to my table by the attractions of my wine, a luxury in which they have not many opportunities of indulging. The effect of this enforced abstinence is to make them so eager for drink, that they swill themselves with it whenever they get the chance." (Bousbecq 1881, 88–89, 166).

The *kadi* of Edirne in 1565 was ordered to prevent the importation of alcohol, stating that any amount found in Muslim households in the city would be spilled without preserving a single drop (Kovačević 1985, no. 444, p. 202, no. 460, p. 211). In the same year, some Jewish tavern-owners in Bitola were accused at the kadi's court of selling alcohol to Muslims, the Sublime Port resolved that an in-

vestigation was needed and if the accused were found guilty, they should be penalized by Sharia law (Kovačević 1985, No.149, p. 87; Gradeva 2005, 15–43).

In Sarajevo, the earliest evidence shows that taverns opened around the same time—1565/92; in the beginning, owners and bartenders were non-Muslims. However, many Muslim poems describe joyful wine drinking in taverns; the chronicler Başeski (1747–1804) recorded 21 taverns in Sarajevo in the second half of the 18th century, while also duly noting the names of citizens who had died of drunkenness and those who had acquired the nickname „drunkard." (Bašeskija 1987, 70, 93, 113, 243, 265, 327; Mujić 1954–1955, 287–98).

The earliest record on *gümrük* on brandy is in the kanunname of Vidin in 1586, and refers to *raki* transported along the River Danube. A couple of decades later, according to the 1604 census, a tax on distilling ovens (*kazan*s), and not on the quantity of the product, was collected during the *panayir* at kasaba Trn in the vicinity of Banja Luka. This points at extensive river transport along the Sava and Danube, the final product—brandy—as well as its production technology (Bojanić 1974, 67; Handžić 2000, 544).[6]

There were troubles in the Balkan region of the Ottoman Empire, because according to the vizier's letter of 1634, the Franciscan friars of Fojnica monastery in Central Bosnia were forbidden to serve either wine or *rakı* to Turks. However, their accounting books from 1666–1672 show how frequently the friars had to pay for the brandy and „wine for feast (*şenlik*)" that the Turks had drunk. *Šljivovica* was measured by *okka* (1,2828 kg), pint and load, and its value varied greatly, from 10 to 16 akçes per okka, obviously depending on the quality and quantity purchased (Matasović 1930, Nos. 356, 559ff).

Records show 44 distilling ovens during the Habsburg rule in Belgrade, between 1719 and 1739, when the monopoly for brandy trade was leased to Jewish merchants. Since the Ottoman re-conquest, alcohol was allegedly imported through *iskele* in Zemun, which remained under the Austrian rule until 1918 (Veselinović 1974, 534–535). In the Habsburg Empire, the consumption of drinks (*Tranksteuer*) was taxed—wine and beer—, and brandy upon its appearance, which in Bohemia was around the year 1583. During the course of the 17th century, a majority of German towns managed acquired the monopoly from the state, so that the income from alcohol consumption went directly to the city

[6] According to the lexicographical entry 'rakija' from 1952, the earliest record of 'burnt wine' – 'vino žeženo' could be found in the manuscript of Konstantine Philosopher, *Skazanie o pismeneh*, written alongside the word 'sicera' (*Rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika* JAZU XIII, Zagreb 1952, 15–16 (https://www.fsb.unizg.hr/usb_frontend/files/1449073107–0-hazu_1.htm) (November 17, 2016). However, the earliest preserved copy of this manuscript is from the 17th century, so this *glossa* – 'vino žeženo' should be dated accordingly – for this information I express my gratitude to Prof. Tatjana Subotin Golubović, the expert on Serbian manuscripts.

treasury (Berenger 1994, 169, *passim*). In Slavonia and Srem, the southern parts conquered after the War of the Holy League (1683–1699), the landlords exercised their feudal monopoly rights to produce, distribute, and sell wine, beer, and spirits (brandy), and to own drinking places. After numerous complaints by peasants, in 1737 Carl VI issued the First Urbarium of Slavonia, which precisely stipulated that while landowners had the right to open taverns, peasants were free to distill their own brandy, have their own equipment (*kazan*s), and freely sell wine and brandy in the winter half of the year—from St Michael's to St George's feasts (October 26 – April 24)— (Grujić 19, 186–188, 195, 265).[7]

Meanwhile, in parts of the Austrian border, such as Peterwardein (Petrovaradin, Novi Sad), soldiers' economies included making and selling *šljivovica*, along with agriculture and animal husbandry (Gavrilović 1999, 149–157). According to Spiridon Jović, the main reason for foreigners' shorter lifespans in Slavonia was their immoderate use of *syrmische*, *doppelt gebrannte Rakia und der Karlowitzer Wein*, more than the notorious malaria (*Wechselfieber*). According to this record, foreign soldiers abused these cheap beverages, spending their lives almost constantly intoxicated (Jowitsch 1835, 20; Jović 2004, 18).

Traveler's Eyes

The literature on „others", „otherness" and narratology theory is growing daily without losing its appeal in academic research; I will point only to a fraction of the increasing body of evidence on this topic, which is important to my own lines of enquiry. The testimonies I chose to present here concern the blurred lines/visions of Muslim and non-Muslim places for drinking alcoholic beverages, which mostly comply with previous observations in other parts of the spacious and multicultural Ottoman Empire. These accounts should be taken „cum grano salis", and not as a factual report on daily life's eating and drinking rituals, because the wish to entertain the readers „back home", the lure to picture something „extraordinary" or unfamiliar was only a step away from turning the exotic into grotesque (Blanks and Frassetto 1999; Brummett 2009; ead. 2014, 21–44).

The crusader's *Bertrandon de la Broquière* itinerary and pilgrimage book, *Le voyage d'outremer*, is, in spite of his audience—the court of Philippe Le Bon of Burgundy and his successors—relatively non-Islamophobic, with a more ethnographical approach than what might be expected of him and the genre itself. He wrote about a visit to a „watering hole" in Hama, in Syria, in 1432; he was brought to the place, owned by a Greek, by his fellow travelers, who had just

[7] In the text of the farmers' complaints, the word for tavern is „mehana" – p. 217, 220, passim, and 'bircauz', 239. The landowners taxed every kazan with 2 florins per year, whether it had been used or not – p. 237.

returned from Mecca, so that they could indulge in drinking not „before their own countrymen". He paints the following elaborate scene: „They proposed that I should accompany them to partake, whether from pure friendship or to authorize them to drink wine in the presence of the Greek. This man conducted us to a small gallery where we all six seated ourselves in a circle on the floor. He first placed in the midst of us a large and handsome earthen jug that might contain four gallons at least: he then brought for each of us a pot full of wine, which he poured into the jug, and placed beside it, two earthen porringers to serve for glasses..." It took all night out of the caravan-saray, with the basha turning a blind eye to the stumbling men coming back from what appears to be *meyhancilik* —"wine indulgence". Bertrandon gave the following advice to his readers: „I mention all this, to forewarn any persons that may travel through these countries, to avoid drinking with the natives, unless they shall wish to swallow so much as will make them fall to the ground" (Brocquiere 1807, 156–158; Brokijer 2002, 46–47; Coman 2007/8, 87–120). On the other side of the world, in Europe, at the beginning of the 16th century, the refusal of a glass of any alcoholic drink among males was considered a *faux pas* that could have certainly provoked a brawl, or a knife-fight (Tlusty 2001).

The janissary in the escort of the Jesuit priest, Bartholomeus Cassius (Kašić), who made pastoral visitations in Bosnia and Serbia in 1612, was so „wet inside" with the wine he had drank, that he relied on his heavy horse too much, while crossing a stream (probably the River Ub). The horse barely made it across, and the janissary „qui non sequebatur ceteros, equo eminentiore confisus, quo natante alteram ripam vix madidus evadit, vino antea epoto intus madidior" (Fermendžin 1892, 348; Milobar 1904, 260). Another drunken janissary, from the convoy of the Bosnian pasha marching to war, attacked the Englishman Henry Blunt on his visit to Sarajevo in 1634, though fortunately, without success (Blunt 1636, 8).

Following is Evliya Çelebi's (1611–c.1682) account, which even though is not that of „an outsider," is included due to the importance of his work. His descriptions of taverns in the Galata quarter of Istanbul were harsh, this was the Greek quarter, and in it a variety of „poisons" were served, with harmful effect on the „sinners:"

> „...notorious forbidden ruby-dripping wines, including *misket* (from Bulgaria) and wines from Ancona, Syracuse, Mudanya, Erdemit, and Bozcaada (Tenedos). When I pass through that wicked locale and see hundreds of downtrodden tavern slaves lying in the highway, bareheaded and barefooted, and inquire about their wretched state, some put forth this verse:
> I am so drunk I do not know
> What is worldly or divine?
> Who am I? Who is the cupbearer?
> What is the crimson wine? „ (Evliya Çelebi 2011, 19–20)

This „an of the world" made a list of 75 intoxicating substances and beverages that he never, ever consumed, like tobacco, coffee, and tea, as well as different types of wine, beer and brandy (Dankoff 2006, 162–163). Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet show in great detail that the consumption of wine in meyhanes was largly tolerated in Istanbul, as long as it did not provoke public unrest, urban or military outbursts, the main concern of the government, while listening to ulema and procuring revenue for the treasury (Boyar and Fleet 2010, 194–200).

The texts of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) have been closely analyzed many times, since hers is one of the few female voices of travel literature in the Orient. As Palmira Brummett expertly derived (Brumett 2014, 35–38), her „report" on daily conversations held in Belgrade with Achmet-beg, an Ottoman noble and scholar (*effendi*), is not so much about him and the Turks, but more about *her* at the center of the stage: „You cannot imagine how much he is delighted with the liberty of conversing with *me;*" *her* questions, *her* education: „*I pass* for a *great scholar* with him, by relating to him some of the Persian tales, which *I find* are genuine". (Cursive by J. Mrgić).

Another possible connection that I would like to add regards an elaborated „sophism" on the Sharia prohibition of wine and brandy, which seems to have been common among the Ottoman elite and military class in the Empire's outskirts, including Belgrade. When Lady Mary asked Achmet-beg about his liberal, daily wine drinking, with her and her husband, „he made answer, that all the creatures of God are good, and designed for the use of man; however, that the prohibition of wine was a very wise maxim, and meant for the common people, being the source of all disorders amongst them, but that the prophet never designed to confine those that knew how to use it with moderation; nevertheless, he said that the scandal ought to be avoided and that he never drank it in public. This is the general way of thinking amongst them, and very few forbear drinking wines, that are able to afford it" (Wortley Montagu 1805, 71–73; Filipović 2010, 147–202).

Another excuse made to avoid the basic religious rule in Islam could be found in the travel book of a tobacco salesman from Vienna, Nikolas Ernst Kleeman, who was sailing along the Danube in 1768, and at the end of October, docked in Belgrade. His report is the following:

> „Dem Konsul [i.e. Ottoman pasha in Belgrade – J.M.], hatte ich eine Flasche Rosoli zum Trinken gereichet; er hatte sie einen Augenblick auf die Seite gestellet; plötzlich erwischte sie ein Janitschar, und in eben dieser Geschwindichkeit war auch der Rosoli verschlucktet. Er ist ihnen zwar verboten, aber die Janitscharen, die sonst keine ungeschickten Ausleger des Gesetzes seyn mögen, erklären hierinnen den Koran anders, und sagen: Der Brandwein könnte nicht unter die verbotenen Getränke gerechnet werden, weil er durch das Feuer gegangen wäre." (Kleemann 1773, 16–25).

> [I had given the basha a bottle of Rosoli as a present; he let it out of the view for just a moment; then a janissary swiftly grabbed it and in that same speed, he drank the Rosoli. This is forbidden for them, but the janissaries, who would otherwise be not inapt interpreters of the Law, explained here the Al-Quran differently and say: brandy cannot be taken for forbidden drink, since it went through the fire. Transl. by J. Mrgić]

This libertine interpretation of an al-Quran text relies on the „purifying" effect of fire, which has ancient origins in human culture, predating all current major religions (Pyne 2001, 85–90). The liquor in question—Rosoli, its production and many varieties are extensively described by Orfelin in his treatise *The Experienced Wine Cellar Owner*, published just 15 years after Kleeman's visit to Ottoman Belgrade. As Achmet-beg, Orfelin praised the wine as the most blissful and useful drink of all God's creations, but only when consumed „reasonably and moderately". He listed methodically all the symptoms of addiction to alcohol, including phases of behavior and health deterioration (Orfelin 1783; Mrgić 2015, 16–17).

Lastly, a word on syncretism of everyday life in Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina, regarding the medicinal power of brandy. Robert Dunkin, an English adventurer, who travelled driving a Mercedes Benz with his wife in the last decade of the 19th century, visited the Franciscan friar in Glavatičevo; there, he enquired about doctors and medicine in this „forsaken parts", and was given the following reply by his host:

> „As we chatted over a bottle of his excellent wine (grown in his own vineyard at Konjica, for these Franciscans don't take the vow of poverty), the question of doctors and medicine in these out-of-the-way places came up. He modestly informed us that, though he possessed no great skill, the people hereabouts always go to him. 'The other day,' said he, 'a Turk from Bjelemić [Bilimišće—J.M.] (six hours away) sent an express begging me to help him, as he was very ill, and could keep nothing on his stomach—not even water. I diagnosed the case,' he continued, 'to be one of chill of the abdomen, and I sent the following message: 'Bake barley loaf, and as it comes out of the oven cut it in two and wet it with *brandy*. Then pepper it well, and apply it as hot as you can bear it, one half to the stomach, and the other to the small of the back. Repeat this a few times, and you will be cured.' After the third application he was cured" (Dunkin 1897, 347–348).

This evidence supports a contrasting opinion about Ottoman medicine, discussed elaborately by Miri Shefer Mossenson: that alcohol *per se* could be used for medicinal purposes to save someone's life. These opposing and multilayered opinions in religion, medicine, culture, and practice on intoxication, intoxicating substances, permission, and prohibition, mirrored the complexity of the multicultural, multi-religious, and surprisingly tolerant Ottoman Empire (Shefer-Mossensohn 2009, 90–95). Her conclusions are in full accordance with the testimonies of the evidence from the Ottoman Balkans, as I hope to present here.

Conclusion

Views regarding wine consumption in pre-Ottoman and Ottoman times in the Balkans show differences that beyond doubt cannot be exclusively attributed to religion. The introduction of spirit—*aquae vitae*—distilling technology, and brandy consumption, added another strain to the management of a vast region that crossed national and cultural borders, the multinational and multicultural Ottoman Empire. Periodically, the sultans issued decrees ordering the prohibition of coffee-houses or wine houses, as well as of opium and tobacco smoking; these attempts were neither constant nor consistent. However, those measures testify to the concerns of the highest civil and religious authorities of the Empire, sultans and *ulema*s, to maintain the public order, political stability, and Muslim orthodoxy.

In this context, the „success" of plum brandy household production and its consumption at the end of the 16th century was an indirect result of factors that include climate deterioration, as cooler and wetter climates unfavorable for viticulture unfolded with the LIA, and also as war and general insecurity took hold of the Balkans. Unlike winegrowing and wine production, plums were more resistant to the changing climate, easier to grow and maintain, while their distillation was a relatively straight-forward process that was not as „alchemic" as once was.

By the 18th century, distillation technologies were widespread, reaching villages and land estates. From time to time, efforts to restrict the consumption of brandy and wine to taverns in non-Muslim quarters of cities were put in place. An effendi in Belgrade, Achmet-bey, seemed to voice the opinion of the Ottoman high class on less restrictive uses of „res prohibita", only for the elites. This did not include the janissaries, who tended to over-consume intoxicating substances, turning them more unruly and disobedient over time. The Russian and Habsburg Empires shared an interest to hold state monopolies over production and distribution of wine and spirits, in various ways, an issue that could be further explored.

There is a great abundance of historical evidence about the intricate relations and mutual inter-dependences over time between societies and culture, religious and economic issues, private and public domains, and „domestic" and „foreign" spheres.... In these, the roles of beverages such as wine and brandy should be analyzed contextually. As evidenced elsewhere in the modern world, technology-transfers have triggered cultural shifts; while poverty induced increases in alcohol production and consumption add to violent crime. This was no exception in the Ottoman Empire, where the state was worried not so much about the well-being of its subjects, as for taxation issues of alcohol as a source of revenue.

The pendulum of religious tolerance and prohibition, both in Islam and Christianity, depended heavily on other circumstances, including external factors such as climate, internal ones such as warfare, or overseas colonial supplies. Since this topic is far from being exhausted, I would love to instigate further inquiries in the field of consumption cultures in the Ottoman Balkans, where differences seem to be smaller than they might appear to be at first.

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Aqua vitae – Beleške o geografiji proizvodnje i potrošnje alkohola na osmanskom Balkanu

Rad predstavlja nastavak mojih istraživanja o međusobnom uticaju, zapravo preplitanju uticaja klimatskih i društveno-ekonomskih činilaca na proizvodnju najpre vina, a od 16. veka nadalje, i alkoholnih pića. Klimatsko zahlađenje i znatno veća količina padavina, a manja osunčanost, nastupila je polovinom pomenutog veka, i u istorijskoj klimatologiji se ovaj period, koji traje do oko polovine 19. veka, naziva „Malim ledenim dobom". Ne samo na osmanskom Balkanu, već širom sred-

nje i zapadne Evrope, vinogradarstvo je pretrpelo ozbiljne i dugoročne štete, i nije bilo više isplativo, s obzirom na količinu uloženog rada specijalizovanih radnika i troškova. Krajnji proizvod, vino, bilo je ne samo nedovoljno količinski, već i lošeg kvaliteta, najčešće veoma kiselo zbog malog procenta šećera. U drugim delovima Evrope, društva su se okrenula većoj proizvodnji piva, potom novih alkoholnih pića – rakije, džina, ruma i votke, već u zavisnosti od podneblja i raspoloživih sirovina. Na osmanskom Balkanu opaža se povećana proizvodnja rakije od domaće šljive, koja je otpornija na klimatske promene od vinove loze, a ne zahteva specijalne veštine gajenja, niti prerade. Suva šljiva postaje značajna i kao izvozni artikal, i na taj način doprinosi povećanju prihoda domaćinstva. Transfer tehnologije proizvodnje alkoholnih pića kretao se kako mediteranskim pomorskim putevima, tako izgleda i Dunavom i Savom, da bi već početkom osmanaestog veka proizvodnja se odvijala na selima. Napori osmanskih vlasti bili su usmereni i na očuvanje pravovernosti muslimana, ali i na očuvanje prihode od poreza na proizvodnju i distribuciju vina i alkoholnih pića. Stoga se ovo pitanje sagledava kao društvenokulturni fenomen, gde su se ukrštali javna i privatna sfera, politički i verski propisi. Tekst donosi kratak pregled jezičkih termina i novih pozajmica, novih balkanizama, koji svedoče u prilog opšteprihvaćene kulturne prakse konzumacije alkohola, koja je, kao i proizvodnja, bila prvenstveno u domenu muškaraca, a sve unutar granica jednog multikulturalnog i multikonfesionalnog carstva. Deo putopisne literature je izbor za ilustraciju nekih već opaženih pojava, kao što je ponašanje osmanske, odnosno, islamske elite, koja privatno uživa u „zabranjenim stvarima”, poput efendije Ahmet-bega u Beogradu. Konzumacija žestokih pića raširila se i u vojnom staležu, te su primeri opijenih janičara brojni, i to je uticalo na njihovu sve veću nasilnost i neposlušnost prema organima javne vlasti. Osim povremene upotrebe, ritualne, u sklopu druženja muškaraca, navedeni su primeri medicinske upotrebe rakije, opet kao samo mali deo postojećeg korpusa izvora. Tema je daleko od toga da bude iscrpljena, i nadamo se da ćemo imati druge prilike da se vratimo analizi kompleksnih društvnenih i kulturnih obrazaca, kao što je konzumacija alkoholnih pića.

Ključne reči: brendi, šljivovica, destilacija, trgovina, Otomansko carstvo, 16. do 19. vek

Aqua vitae – Notes sur la géographie de production et de consommation d'alcool dans les Balkans ottomans

L'article traite le début de la distillation de l'eau-de-vie dans les Balkans ottomans, le transfert de technologie, le commerce et la taxation, aussi bien que les modèles de consommation. Ces modèles incluent les règles de production, de distribution et d'utilisation de l'alcool en fonction de la religion, de la classe sociale et du sexe, c'est-à-dire les restrictions et leurs transgressions. Les

sources linguistiques, documentaires et narratives sont déployées pour créer une image à multiples facettes. La production d'alcools variés, avant tout de l'eau-de-vie de prune dans les Balkans ottomans et la consommation des boissons alcoolisées pourraient être considérées comme un domaine où le privé et le public, l'officiel et le clandestin, le permis et l'interdit se sont mélangés et ont coexisté, et ont influencé le système politique et religieux ottoman.

Mots clés: eau-de-vie, eau-de-vie de prune, distillation, commerce, Empire ottoman, du 16e au 19e siècles

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