Salonica, city of travelers: Analysis and comparison of travelogues and travel accounts on Salonica from the 16th to 18th century.

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In loving memory of Dimitris.

Τα καταφέραμε Μήτσο, αυτή η διπλωματική είναι δικιά σου.

Θα τα πούμε από κοντά σύντομα.

Contents

Introduction

Salonica is located in the northern part of the Balkan peninsula, in the Macedonian region of modern Greece. The city was founded in 316 BC by Cassander and quickly became a trade center of the Macedonian Empire. In the 2nd century BC, the city was conquered by the Romans who greatly expanded the urban infrastructure by building roads, temples and a forum. After the fall of the western Roman Empire, Salonica flourished as the governing and cultural center of the region throughout the Middle Ages as part of the Byzantine Empire. A new era begun for the city, as it came into the hands of a rapidly growing Ottoman Empire in 1430. Centuries of Byzantine Christian rule came to an end and made way for the Muslim Ottomans. New settlers populated the city and most churches became mosques. The last character defining event of early modern Salonica, came in boats and caravans. The Sephardim, Iberian Jews, were expulsed for Spain and Portugal in the 1490s and settled in Salonica, carrying with them their religious beliefs, customs, language and culture.

To this day, ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman infrastructure and art co-exist together resulting to a unique multicultural cityscape. A modern-day visitor would enter the city center through the city walls, build in 5th century AD. Then he would immediately see the Arch of Galerius, a Roman monument commemorating the victory of Galerius over the Sassanid Persians. Walking around the city, he would hear the bells of a Byzantine era Orthodox Church as he passed by the Jewish quarter, close to the old port, surrounded with arcades that once were full of colorful fabrics and fragrant spices. And as the day ended, he would walk up hill to the Upper-City to see the sunset from the Yedi Kule fortress, only to lose himself in the labyrinth-like streets of the Ottoman quarters. Now imagine a visitor to the city in the 16th century. Interestingly enough, he would see the same forementioned buildings, but the surroundings, i.e. people, houses, markets, roads, would be completely different. Travelers that visited Salonica in the early modern period had various reasons to do so. Inside their travelogues we can examine their reasons and backgrounds which made them see, observe and write about different aspects of the city.

This research aims to answer the question: What travelers wrote about Salonica from the 16th to 18th century? More precisely, how they portray Salonica's cityscape and diverse population, what did they say about the city's fabric industry and clothing of its population and last, how they

perceive Salonica's history. Historiography on Salonica tends to portray Salonica in one of two ways. Either as a multicultural Ottoman city or -especially in Greek historiography- as once a Christian and Greek city that was suppressed and was forced to adapt to Ottoman rule. In the former interpretation, Jewish presence is an expression of Ottoman suppression, which adhered to a principal of "divide and conquer". By analyzing and comparing travelogues on Salonica, this thesis aspires to give insight into European -and partly Ottoman- perceptions of the city's social, economical and historical status throughout the early modern period. I argue that foreign perception of Salonica shows a city whose character was changing by the century. Salonica experienced little to no major changes after the arrival of the Sephardim in its internal cultural make up. Even so, the perception of a Salonica as the New Jerusalem peaked in the 17th century and a few decades later on the 18th century, travelers reimagined Salonica as an ancient Greek urban center. The city itself did not change, but European perception did.

Research in travelogues and travel writings have been an important part Greek historiography. From as early as 1858, Saint-Marc Girardin's "*Les voyageurs en Orient et la Turquie depuis le traité de Paris*" was translated P. Giourdis and edited in Athens under the title: "The travelers of the East and the Turkey after the Treaty of Paris. Up until recent times, where the multi-volume publication of Kyriakos Simopoulos' "Foreign travelers in Greece", published in 1994, which treats an overview of travel writings from the antiquities until the 19th century. The more recent specialized research, such as Ioli Viggopoulou's "*Le monde grec vu par les voyageurs du XVIe siècle*", published in Athens in 2004, which treats the wider Greek area during the 16th century. Or V. Tourptsoglou-Stefanidou's *Travelogues and geographical accounts of the Island of Limnos 15th -20th ce.*[1]. We must also mention A. Panaretou's "*A Bibliography of East European Travel Writing"*, published 2008, in which she contextualizes Greece in Balkan travel writing, an undoubtably fresh outlook where she highlights the eastern-European elements in traveler perceptions.

Logically, one could expect a plethora of travelogue research referring to Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city to date. Analogically, however, that is not the case. K. Mertzios, a Greek ambassador in Venice and history enthusiast, was among the first to comprise a collection of letters,

[1] Τουρπτσόγλου-Στεφανίδου, Β. (1986). *Ταξιδιωτικά και γεωγραφικά κείμενα για τη νήσο Λήμνο (15ος–20ός αι.)*. Εταιρία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών

diplomatic and court documents referring to Thessaloniki in 1947. In his life's work, *Monuments of Macedonian History*[2], despite methodological errors, given that Mertzios was not a trained historian, we find important accounts of trade, economic relations details of everyday life. There is also the doctoral thesis of S. Tampaki, published in 1994 in Athens, *Thessaloniki through Descriptions of Travelers: Religious Monuments 12th-19th ce*.[3] Tampaki meticulously comprised and analyzed accounts and impressions on religious buildings of the city. We must point out that out of the 138 pages of analysis and commentary - excluding the list of sources - only 3 pages refer to synagogues and 7 on mosques, focusing almost exclusively on accounts of Christian monuments. In 2008, A. Grigoriou and E. Hekimoglou published *Thessaloniki, the city of travelers 1430-1930*[4], a collection of travelogues and letters accompanied by a critical overview of the sources. This research, again, focuses on buildings and Christian customs of the said period. Another collection of travelogues is G. Megas and J. Benmayor's *the Jews of Thessaloniki, Accounts by Non-Thessalonians 50 BC-1912*[5], published in Thessaloniki in 2018. It is a collection of over 342 text sources that mention primarily Thessalonian Jews and by extension Christians and Muslims. Megas and Benmayor's research, however, does not extend to a commentary of the said sources. The work was commissioned by the Head of the Israelitan Community of Thessaloniki[6].

The last two works agree to a periodization of four distinct eras: 50 - 1492, early Christian and Byzantine period until the Ottoman conquest and the arrival of the Sephardim. 1492-1750, covers the arrival of the Sephardim Jews and the rise and decline of the city up to the Sabbatian movement of the 1750s. 1750-1850, a period of steady growth of Salonica. Last is the period 1750-1912, which contains sources from the Tanzimat era of Ottoman modernization up until the annexation of Salonica by the Greeks in 1912. As I will explain further down, I will adhere in part to this periodization. I will be dividing the sources based on century, from the 16th to the 18th, but I will be referencing the historical background based on the major events that Megas and Hekimoglou provide.

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[2] Μέρτζιος Ν.. (2007) *Μνημεία Μακεδονικής Ιστορίας, Εταιρία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών*

[3] Ταμπάκη, Σ. (1998). *Η Θεσσαλονίκη στις Περιγραφές των Περιηγητών: Λατρευτικά Μνημεία 12ος–19ος αι.* Πανεπιστημιακές Εκδόσεις ΕΚΠΑ

[4] Γρηγορίου, Α.Χ., & Χεκίμογλου, Ε. (2008). *Η Θεσσαλονίκη των περιηγητών 1430–1930*. Μίλητος

[5] "*Οι Εβραίοι της Θεσσαλονίκης, Μαρτυρίες Μη Θεσσαλονικέων 50πΧ-1912"*

[6] Μέγας, Μπενμαγιόρ (2018). Οι Εβραίοι της Θεσσαλονίκης, Μαρτυρίες Μη Θεσσαλονικέων 50πΧ-1912, University Press Publishers p.1

Lastly, it is important to address the use of travelogues and travel writing in historical essays and books treating Thessaloniki. It would be extremely difficult to understand the context of travel accounts without them being used in larger narrative. Mazower's classic *"Salonica, City of Ghosts"*[7] or J.S Gerber's *"Cities of splendour in the shaping of Sephardi history"*[8] offer a historiographical overview of the city focusing on the Jewish presence. Travel accounts in those instances pose extreme value as they are often the only surviving source from a period stretching from 1450 to roughly 1600[9]. We get information about trade relationships, population number estimates and disasters, such as fires or plagues. Also, there is also D. Naar's research about the Jewish diaspora[10]. His article, "Fashioning the "Mother of Israel": The Ottoman Jewish Historical Narrative and the Image of Jewish Salonica", published in Jewish History Volume 28, uses quite few travel accounts to prove historiographical fallacies of the early Zionist movement[11].

Unlike Naar, I do not aim to debunk or right any inaccuracies through my thesis. As a Ladino proverb says, "nada es nuevo baxo del sol", nothing is new under the sun. My goal is to adhere to existing Greek historiography, i.e. to refocus the perspective of Salonica to highlight the city's multi-cultural and diverse character throughout the early modern period. A perspective which I argue was the same with early modern visitors. The sources also made me realize the underrepresented, in my opinion, Jewish presence and agency in Salonica in Greek historiography. As I will explain further down, the nature of travel writing and travel accounts tends to be indicative and quite revealing of stereotypes and popular views of their time.

While travel writing can be traced back to Homer's *Odyssey*[12][13], only in recent decades have scholars come to appreciate the richness of this hard-to-define literary genre. One key argument for this dismissal is that travel writing is very fluid in its definition. European literature is full of

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[7] Mazower, M. (2004). Salonica, city of ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews, 1430-1950. HarperCollins
[8] Gerber, J. S., & Liverpool University Press, associated with work. (2021). *Cities of splendour in the shaping of Sephardi history*. The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization
[9] Ελλαδα περιηγητων citation
[10] Naar, D. E. (2016). *Jewish Salonica : between the Ottoman Empire and modern Greece* (1st ed.). Stanford University Press
[11] Naar, D.E (2014). Fashioning the "Mother of Israel": The Ottoman Jewish Historical Narrative and the Image of Jewish Salonica. *Jewish History*, *28*(3/4), 337–372.
[12] Annita Panaretou, Maria Kostaridou, Alex Drace-Francis, & Wendy Bracewell. (2008). Greek Travel Writing. In *A Bibliography of East European Travel Writing on Europe,* Central European University Press. p.6
[13] Hulme, P., & Youngs, T. (2002), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (pp. 1–14). introduction, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.1

fictional literary works that narrate a journey to remote places, where myth and reality co-exist. On the other hand, even works of fiction, such as the travels of Marco Polo, contain important historical evidence[14]. While a literary comparison or a cultural analysis of travel writing is definitely exciting research for a philologist or a sociologist, historians must become a jack of all trades to make sense of Mandeville or Marco Polo. So how can historians elicit historical truths from travel writing, given the fact that travelers often opt for thrilling descriptions rather than accurate ones? The current debate on the credibility of travel writing as a reliable scientific source is quite extensive for this essay to address in detail[15].The evaluation of information provided by travelers must be made in this context: it was human to exaggerate their role, action and findings in their tours, to disguise - sometimes illegal - activities and to emphasize what the reading public real or presumed - would like to read. The value of their information (which should always be examined carefully) is uneven and varies according to individuals and the times However, this thesis will adhere to one major evaluating principle: Travelers must have visited the land they describe. This does not necessarily ensure accuracy but potentially highlights the impressions of travelers that actually interacted with Salonica and its surroundings. Even so, one aspect that we cannot dismiss from any early modern travelogue is that quite often they inspire or copy one another. For example, many travel writings about Salonica were written for the sole purpose of mapping and informing about an itinerary to the Holy Mountain or a safe course to Istanbul. Travelogues either added on or simply copied existing information about itineraries. For this reason, I chose to include in my analysis a few sources from travelers that passed by Salonica but most likely never entered the city. As for who qualifies as a traveler, since my goal is to analyze the different impressions that visitors had on the complex religious landscape of the city, I chose to include whoever is not native to the area that constitutes modern Greece. I've chosen mostly western European travelers for two reasons. First, availability. There is a millennia old tradition of journeying from west to east. The early modern period witnessed a revitalization of travel and travel writing, a tradition abandoned since the fall of the western Roman Empire[16]. Second, religious contrast. By the 16th century, the centralization of state power made Christianity a

[14] Wood, F. (1995). *Did Marco Polo go to China?* Secker & Warburg, Haw, S. G. (2006). *Marco Polo's China : a Venetian in the realm of Khubilai Khan*. Routledge.
[15] Youngs, T. (2013). Introduction: Defining the terms. In *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (pp. 1–16). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 4-5

definitive identity factor for Europeans. The fact that Salonica was not only under Ottoman rule but also a predominantly Jewish city, made it more interesting for travelers to address the apparent differences.

Naturally, the fluidity of the definition of travel writing begs the question of who counts as a traveler in this research. The answer is anyone who visited Salonica and wrote about it. An Italian merchant who debarks to the port of Salonica to trade or negotiate is primarily a businessman and a French diplomat on a mission to the kadi[17] of the city is there as a politician. They become travelers the moment they write about their experience on what they saw or heard. For example, Alonso de Contreras, a Spanish captain who visited Salonica in 1601 on a diplomatic mission for the Habsburg crown, informs us that he set foot on Salonica's port with sixteen other sailors. All seventeen Spaniards shared similar experiences but only Contreras put them on paper in his popular autobiography *"Vida del capitan Alonso de Contreras, caballero del habito de San Juan, natural de Madrid, escrita por el mismo (1582-1633)".* The complete works were gathered and published in 1900 by Manuel Serrano y Sanz in Madrid. Arguably, only Contreras can be regarded as traveler while the others as men on a mission. This statement might be stating the obvious but reflects that European visitors to Salonica who recorded their travels occupied by many professions but share similar impressions. That is, the intense religious difference, and the culture embedded into it.

Tim Youngs notes that "travel writing, one may argue, is the most socially important of all literary genres"[18]. It is an excellent tool for a historian to immerse in thoughts and impressions of an individual describing another culture's architecture, customs etc. What we gain from this subjective genre is the means of contact of two (or more) different cultures. Whether factual or fictional, travelers wrote, most of the time, with the intent of addressing a certain demographic, describing and explaining aspects of city life that they are expected of a travelogue[19]. The traveler, whatever his itinerary or reasons for travel, is primarily characterized by his outsider status. Essentially, he is a foreign observer who might have had a preset view of his destination but nevertheless described a culture that he was not a part of. That is especially true for Catholic or Protestant Christians travelling to Greece, the center of Orthodox Christianity and the home of the

[17] An ottoman regional overseer with administrative and judicial duties
[18] Ibid p.1
[19] Περιηγητες σελ 23

largest Jewish population in Europe[20]. Consequently, inside travel writing we can see the construction of the "other" and we can assess how a concept of a foreign land, an enemy, an ally or a heathen takes shape outside the institutional/ central medium, like diplomacy or warfare. That does not mean that politics do not influence travel writing or that travelers represent only themselves. After all, most of the sources used in this thesis were written mainly by wealthy, powerful, or at the very least, well connected merchants, emissaries, ranking officials etc. The beginning of the 16th century, also known as the Age of Discovery, ushered a new era of travel expenditures to the east and west. European powers funded and competed with each other for new trade routes and maps of uncharted territory, knowledge became synonymous with influence.

To compare the impressions of travelers, there must be a distinction between the three major groups of early modern Salonica: Ottomans, Jews and Greeks. This will give us a more organized view of their impressions upon each faith and their internal dynamic. The travelogue collections by G. Megas and E. Hekimoglou will serve as the primary source material. These collections, when considered collectively, encompass approximately seventy sources from the early modern period. The two collections that gather traveler accounts on Salonica offer useful insights but come with certain limitations. First, both collections are translated into Greek. During my research, translating the original texts was not always possible, so in cases of French, German, Turkish and Italian sources, I translated the Greek translation. English, Greek and Spanish translation were done by me. This potentially creates a risk of translation inaccuracies or the loss of subtle meanings. Second, Ottoman travel accounts remain the most underrepresented group. This is partly due to their scarcity, but also because of the difficulty in accessing Ottoman Turkish sources. As a result, local or Muslim perspectives are either marginal or absent. This limits our understanding of how Salonica was viewed by those within the Ottoman world. A final issue is the selectivity within the collections themselves. In some cases, parts of the texts are missing or edited out. The first collection by Hekimoglou, which presents travel sources that mention Salonica in general, leaves out passages that mention the Jewish population. The second collection by Megas, focused on Jewish presence, fills this gap, but only partially, This editorial inconsistency affects how the city's

[20] Gerber, J. S.(2021). *Cities of splendour in the shaping of Sephardi history*. The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.

diversity is portrayed. However, I argue that using both collections offers an overall view on travel accounts, as they complement each other. Lastly, availability of sources increases significantly from the 16th to the 18th century. Travel accounts increased by almost double from the 16th to the 17th century, while a very noticeable increase takes place from the 17th to the 18th as well.

At this juncture I want to point out that most sources are quite short in size, so for each chapter small passages will be complementing the larger ones. Also, for reasons of readability, I will not provide a complete background of all the sources as I will reserve space for the authors whose accounts are more detailed. This is done to give an idea of the type of visitors that Salonica welcomed throughout the centuries. Next, I will be dividing the source content into three categories: Clothing and fabric industry, Cityscape and population, and references to Salonica's past and present. These distinctions are made to offer an overview of potential commonalities that travelers had in the industry, society and history of the city. As for periodization, I chose to assign each chapter to a century, progressing from the 16th to the 18th century. Megas and Hekimoglou comprised collections, not commentaries. Thus, they make their periodization based on major events in Salonica's history, spanning from 1430 up to the 20th century. As stated, this thesis will refer to these events, but it will focus primarily on new or recurring themes of travelogues over the early modern period.

The structure will follow a chronological order, spanning from the 16th to the 18th century. The first chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part will cover accounts beginning with the Ottoman capture of Salonica in 1430 and ending with the arrival of the Sephardic Jews following their expulsion from Spain in 1492. This section aims to provide a clear understanding of Salonica's status before delving into source analysis. The second part of the chapter will focus on the so-called Golden Age of Salonica, namely the 16th century. The second chapter will address the 17th century, a period marked by the consolidation of Ottoman influence and a notable expansion in trade with Europe. The third chapter will examine the 18th century, when European travel increased significantly and Salonica, tied to the classical past of Greece, became an attractive destination. Each chapter will critically examine three main aspects: **Cityscape and Population**; **Clothing and Fabric Industry**; and perceptions of Salonica's past compared to its present-named **Past and Present**. The first aspect will explore descriptions of buildings and infrastructure, along with observations on the city's three main religious and ethnic communities. The second will focus

on the textile economy and clothing styles. The third will assess how travelers understood and presented Salonica's historical legacy. Finaly, by comparison of the three periods we will draw to our findings and conclusion in the last chapter.

1.1From the Ottoman Conquest to the Arrival of the Sephardim (1430-1492)

To better understand Salonica's radical changes during the early modern period, I think it is best to see what travelers wrote before the arrival of the Sephardim in 1492. Sadly, the available travel sources for the period of the Ottoman conquest in 1430, to the arrival of the Sephardi in 1492 are only four. John Anagnostis (late 14thc. -mid. 15th c) was technically not a traveler, since he was an Orthodox priest in Salonica at the time of the Ottoman siege. However, he's the only available source that describes the city right after the Ottomans took the city. Ciriaco dei Pizzecoli (1391-1452), a wealthy Italian merchant that visited Salonica in 1431. Pero Tafur (1410-1484), a Spanish traveler and author that visited in 1436. And Giovanni - Maria Angiolello (mid. 15thc. – 1525) who was a venetian soldier and captive that later served under the Ottoman army. Angiolello was in Salonica in 1470.

Salonica's importance, as a city worth travelling to, adjusts depending on how a travelogue researcher looks at the surrounding space. Located in northern Greece, right in the middle of Via Egnatia, Salonica historically was a station between Rome and Constantinople. Salonica's safe port and vibrant markets made it a focal point for trade, connecting the Balkans with trade routes to the Aegean Sea and Asia Minor. Zooming in, the city's proximity to Mount Athos, one of the most important regions of Orthodox Christianity, meant that pilgrims and curious travelers passed through Salonica on their way to the Holy Mountain. Despite the region's long Christian tradition, the religious landscape of the city during the Early Modern period changed drastically, where different faiths clashed, overlapped or co-existed, following the Ottoman conquest in 1430. It is exactly this amalgam of cultures that made Salonica not only a reference point for travelers but also a central part of its inhabitants' identity.

When Murad II (1421-1451) passed through the gates of the city after a yearlong siege in 1430, he encountered deteriorating churches and decaying public infrastructure while a decimated and tired population suffered the effects of a Byzantine state in its twilight. The streets and markets

were empty for many had left the city, fleeting to Italy and elsewhere Europe, taking with them centuries of culture and craft expertise. Shortly after his victory, Murad, realizing that he essentially had a ghost city in his hands, invited those who fled to resettle. John Anagnostis' accounts, a Greek priest that returned, is the only known source that describes the siege and the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman conquest. About a thousand people came back to Thessaloniki, now named Selanik, and another thousand Turks made up the city's total population[21], when in the 14th century it is estimated that around 100.000 people inhabited in and around the city walls[22].

Past and Present

Even though one can imagine a city devastated and half-abandoned, Ciriaco dei Pizzecolli, a wealthy venetian merchant, describes the city a few months later, in 1431. He enjoyed the patronage of pope Eugene IV (1431-1447) and had close ties with the Visconti and Medici families. Pizzecolli's six volume work, "Comentarii", treats his business travels across the Mediterranean, collecting and reporting epigraphs, art and all sorts of intellectual treasures. Some scholars regard him as one of the forefathers of archeology for his detailed accounts on antiquities. Unfortunately, only a fraction of his work survives for the complete body of the "Commentarii" was destroyed in a fire in 1514. Fragments of his work were fortunately copied and a few centuries after his death they were published in Rome, Pesaro and Florence[23]. Pizzecolli, surprisingly, describes a wealthy city located in the Macedonian region, full of classical architecture, indicating that Murad's repopulation had had immediate effects. Additionally, one can assume that Murad's fury did not extend unto the city's archeological treasures. Walking around the city, Pizzecolli comments on the city's *"old fortified walls of Lysimachus, made of roasted bricks and his epigrams of other heroes and poets; and in the Museum tripod at Helicon was once assumed to be about Homer and Hesiodus"*[24].

While Greece's ancient past was never truly left out of European imagination, interest for material culture peaked with the rediscovery of classical literature during the early modern period. The

[21] John Anagnostes, *Διήγησις περί τῆς τελευταίας άλώσεως τῆς Θεσσαλονίχης*
[22] Laiou, A. (2000). The Byzantine Empire in the Fourteenth Century. In M. Jones (Ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (pp. 795–824). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p 811
[23] Ciriaco, & Bodnar, E. W. (2003). *Later travels* (C. Foss, Tran.). Harvard University Press. p.11-12
[24] M. Vickers (1976). Cyriac of Ancona at Thessaloniki. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, *2*, 75–82

walls of Salonica, however, were built during the 5th century A.D and there is no existing evidence of the epigrams he mentions[25]. Regardless of his credibility, what is evident in Pizzecolli, is a classical scope, which is ready to perceive and connect his readings and prior knowledge to the ruins scattered in Salonica. This is also testified by his mentions of ancient temples and ruins across the city. Perhaps the most interesting aspect is the fact that he did not mention the presence of any mosques in Salonica, and he briefly describes the St Demetrius cathedral, the most important place of worship in Salonica, in use to this day. Lastly, the fact that Pizzecolli considers an orthodox cathedral as a temple of his religion could imply two things. The first would be a literal implication, as the Venetians had bought the city in 1423, in a final attempt by the byzantine emperor to secure the region after decades of Ottoman pressure. The second could be a "humanist sensitivity", trying to bridge antiquity with the present, an intellectual norm at the time. Other travelogues, as we will review later, have a more polemic stance on religion, churches and city dwellers as a whole.

"...in the middle of the market the magnificent arch of our Aemilius Paulus and the ruined temple of Artemis, in which you can clearly see a number of marble statues of gods in the columns. He also saw the holy and magnificent temples of our religion, of which he even liked the magnificent temple of the martyr Demetrius the Trophy Bearer"[26]

As stated, Salonica was closely associated with the pilgrimage to Mount Athos. Pero Tafur, a Spanish traveler and well-known author, provides valuable to support this. Tafur hailed from the noble house of Guzmán of Burgos. He traveled across three continents during the years 1435 to 1439[27]. He departed from his hometown Córdoba. During his journey he participated in various battles, visited shrines, and rendered diplomatic services for Juan II of Castile. He visited North Africa and made his way up to Constantinople, stopping by the islands Cyprus, Rhodes and Tenedos. He visited the Holy Mountain, and most likely Salonica, in 1436. An exact copy of his travelogue survived and was transcribed around the 18th century. The complete work was published in Spanish in Madrid in 1874.

"*In the sea is a very lofty island, which they call Monte Santo"* notes Tafur as he begins to inform the reader on how the *Grand Turk* tried to conquer the "island", *but the plague fell on his troops*[28]

[25] Ibid., 78-79.
[26] Ibid., 76.
[27] Letts, M. (2007). *Pero Tafur: Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*. Gorgias Press
[28] Ibid. Chapter 18, pp. 150-151

There is no other source that confirms that the Ottomans tried to seize the Holy Mount peninsula. The monastic community of the region operated autonomously under the Ottomans, as it did under the Byzantines. Tafur mistakes the Holy Mountain peninsula with an island, thinking that it is inside the Gulf of Salonica. Tafur's only account of actual Salonica is the city's fall to the Ottoman army, for which he "blames" the Venetians.

Giovanni - Maria Angiolello was a Venetian soldier that participated in the defense of Chalkida in 1470 against the Ottomans. After the siege, he was captured and returned with the ottoman army from Euboea to Constantinople, passing by the Macedonian region. There, he enlisted for the Ottoman army and won the favor of the Sultan. He wrote the biography of the Sultan in Italian and Turkish language. He remained in Constantinople until 1483. Among his other writings, a short diary of his captivity from Euboea to Constantinople has survived. His manuscript was found in the Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana, in Venice, by K. Merzios, who translated and published extracts from his journeys in Greece. Angiolelli mentions his station in Salonica in only a few lines, commenting on the city's good strategic position and its defensive walls. The interesting fact in his short account is his mention of Saint Demetrius, the city's protector, as Saint Dominicus. He informs us of the local belief that oils produced by his remains, situated in the city's cathedral, had healing properties.

We can imagine a city in transition, as much as in religion, so in architecture and city scaping. Churches quickly were converted into mosques and newcomers brought with them a new administrative language and new dress codes. The millet system divided the population based on faith. Muslims, naturally, had exclusive access to governmental and military positions, while Christians and Jews, the later was but a small percentage during the 15th century, were subject to additional taxation and discriminatory housing regulations. Each millet group had designated neighborhoods, forming small or medium size communities within the city, the "kehal". Consequently, each kehal had a church, a mosque or a synagogue as its center of administration, where a priest, an imam or a rabbi preceded as the head of his community. This system of inclusion through discrimination provided for Ottoman subjects religious freedoms unprecedented to European standards at the time[29].

[29] Gerber S. (2021) p.281

1.2 The Golden Age of Salonica? (16th century)

In March of 1492, the Catholic Monarchs Isabel and Fernando of Spain issued the "Alhambra Decree", expulsing all Jews from Spain, after the completion of the Reconquista against the Muslims of Al-Andalus. A similar decree against Portuguese Jews followed shortly after. The Sephardim, a name deriving from *Sepharad*, the Hebrew word for Iberia, banished from their homelands, sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire, a more tolerant regime in matters of religion. Jews arrived in the Ottoman territory from all over Europe as Chistian antisemitic sentiments became more aggressive at the turn of the 16th century.

Salonica especially, under Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512), welcomed many Jewish refugees from the Iberian Peninsula. The Sephardim brought with them craft and administrative expertise as many of them were established merchants, tradesmen and courtiers. During the 16th century, Salonica flourished. The introduction of the windmill, a technology brought from Spain, enormously increased wool and fabric production, making Salonica one of the largest fabric producers in the world. The newly settled Jews opened new markets and trading networks for the city, as they kept close economic ties with their old homelands. The first printing press in the Ottoman empire was introduced by the Jews in Istanbul in 1493 and as early as 1503 in Salonica. Ottoman scholars were very suspicious of this new technology, prohibiting Arabic but neither Greek nor Hebrew from being printed. Renowned Jewish scholars and theologians were free to write and publish religious treatises, commentaries and philosophical texts and Salonica quickly became a world-famous center of Judaism, attracting Jews, Christians and Muslims scholars from all over Europe and the Middle East. By 1589, Salonica housed around 24.000 Sephardic, Ashkenazi and Romaniote Jews, totaling to more than 60% of the city's population that rounded forty-thousand souls. When French cleric Nicolas de Nicolay arrived in Salonica in 1551, he noted that he saw more than eighty synagogues, far more than Christian churches[30]. Samuel Usque, a 16th century Jewish-Portuguese theologian and historian, in his famous work, *Consolation for the Tribulation of Israel,* referred to Salonica as "City and Mother of Israel" while Zionists in the 19th century were still calling the city "New Jerusalem".

[30] Nicolay (1576) "*Les navigations peregrinations et voyages, faicts en la Turquie"*

Cityscape and Population

Historians claim the 16th century as the Golden Age of Salonica, presumably from an economic standpoint. Most of the 12 sources from the period, however, give us more details of the city after a series of devastating fires in the first half of the 16th century. Fires were part of everyday city life, as many quarters, primarily the Jewish and the Christian, were tightly packed and the houses were made of cheap and flammable materials. Marino Sanuto, a venetian diplomat and historian was in Salonica several times between 1496-1532. We find in his personal diary reports of a fire in June 1510. More than 1.800 houses were burned and a large portion of the Jewish textile industry. Even so, reading his diary one might find answers for the scale of this disaster. Three years before he was amazed by the industriousness taken place in the Jewish quarters of the city. "*There are more than 10.000 households in the Jewish quarter. In them, many occupy themselves in the art of weaving. They also produce ammunition and anything else that the mind can think of...*"[31]. In 1545 another great fire occurred. Once more the Jewish quarter suffered the most damages and left a big scar on the city as it destroyed many synagogues and the libraries inside them. Samuel Usque (c. 1490- aft. 1550) was a Portuguese Jewish author and merchant, who converted to Christianity in order to escape the Inquisition. He visited Salonica in 1545. Usque, in a poetic manner, compares the city before and after the fire. He does not give specific details about buildings or customs. He praises the city as the "*Mother of Israel"*, with strong Jewish presence and God-devoted scholars. Usque reports that a hundred lives were lost in the fire and with them most of the synagogues. A. Contarini, an Italian merchant who visited the same year, wrote "*unfortunately, more than thirty synagogues and studii [*study rooms*] and 5.000 Jewish homes succumbed to the fire. And up to 200 Jewish souls experienced all kinds of death".* We don't know the exact number of synagogues, churches and mosques in the first half of the 16th century, but in the beginning of the 17th century sources say 36 synagogues, 30 churches and 48 mosques[32]. The fire of 1545 is mentioned by name at least five years after the event, in letters and diplomatic reports.

[31] Megas (2018) p. 23
[32] Ibid p. 37, 41

Clothing and Fabric Industry

Nicolas de Nicolay was a French geographer and traveler in the 16th century. He traveled extensively to the Ottoman empire and his writings were quite known in his time. In 1551 he accompanied the French Ambassador to the Sublime Porte and based on his journey wrote *Les navigations peregrinations et voyages, faicts en la Turquie,* published in Antwerp in 1576. Upon his return he was appointed royal geographer by Henry II of France. Nicolay never visited Salonica, but he mentions it briefly in his travelogue, reproducing past impressions of the city.

What is evident from his accounts is the new context of Salonica. Nicolay does not refer at any point to the city's footings in the classical or Hellenistic age. Instead, he comments on the passing of Saint Paul around the 1st century. In Nicolay we encounter one of the first depictions of Salonica as an Ottoman city or, to express it more openly, a city of the Levant. Wealthy merchants, flamboyant clothing, turbans and robes make up the imaginary Salonica of a Frenchman that never set foot in the city. Jews, a few decades after their settlement, form most of the city's population, which identifies its different groups by the color of their headgear. The number of the synagogues that reports do not match any other sources, but it is clear that by 1551 their number was significant.

"[...] The main city [of Macedonia] is Thessaloniki, which is popularly called Salonika. Saint Paul, who was an apostle of Jesus Christ, addressed to its people many beautiful and holy letters. This city, which is still today very famous and rich, is inhabited by three powerful nationalities of different religions, the Christian Greeks, the Jews and the Turks. But the number of Jews, all of whom are very rich merchants, is also the largest. The Jews maintain in this city eighty synagogues. Their headgear consists of a turban, the color of saffron. That of the Christian Greeks is blue and of the Turks crystal clear white. Finally, thanks to the difference in color they can be distinguished from each other. As far as their robes are concerned, they are all long, like those of all the other inhabitants of the East"[33]

In the second half of the 16th century, the Ottomans were at the zenith of their power. Suleyman the Magnificent (1494-1566) expanded the borders of the empire in all directions. The ottoman army throughout the century was a bottomless pit of needs, which local administrations and provincial overseers were trying to fulfill. Salonica especially was bestowed with the task of providing wool for military uniforms. This made Salonica the main producer of fabric in the

[33] Nicolay (1576) p. 151

western ottoman empire and one of the most prominent textile producers in Europe at the time[34]. We learn from a clerk in a trade firm in Istanbul that "*there is an abundance of wool and leather in Salonica, but they don't export it and keep all of it for the uniforms of the Janissaries"*[35]. An anonymous Venetian merchant who was conducting regular trips to Salonica in the 1570s, was quite frustrated by the ottoman regulations on the salonican textile industry at the time[36]. "*It's forbidden,* he says, *for non-Jews to sell mansaki [type of wool] and nobody can sell to them (the Jews) any red or linen fabrics".* A German traveler name M. Heberer von Bretten who was in Salonica 1587, informs us that "*Jews deal the best fabric while Greeks and Armenians sell rags"*[37]. It is quite interesting that throughout the 16th century, none of the sources mention any Turks dealing fabric. In the context of the fabric industry, the Turks exist only as recipients of the product, namely the Janissaries. Gabriel Cavazza, a scholar accompanying the Venetian Ambassador to Istanbul called the Janissary corps *the slaves of the Grand Master.*

[34] Braude, B. (1991). The Rise and fall of Salonica Woollens, 1500-1650: Technology transfer and western competition. *Mediterranean Historical Review*, *6*(2), 216–236.
[35] Megas (2018) p.37
[36] Megas (2018) The diary of this anonymous merchant was found in the venetian Archives and was transcribed by K. Mertzios and is found in *Monuments of Macedonian History, pp. 146-161*
[37] Megas (2018) p.35

A Jewish doctor. Print exerted from "*Les navigations peregrinations et voyages, faicts en la Turquie"*, Antwerp, 1576.

Gabriele Cavazza was secretary to the noble Lorenzo Bernardo. He accompanied him on a mission by order the Venetian Senate. In 1591, they traveled from Venice to Istanbul to arrest the bailiff Girolamo Lippomano for betraying secrets of the Venetian state to Ottoman princes. Lorenzo's expedition followed the route Elbasan-Monastir- Thessaloniki and he wrote down his itinerary to inform others about his route. They arrived in Salonica in May 1591. His original manuscript is kept in the Correr Museum, in Venice. His notes were not published until 1886[38]. Cavazza entered the city from the west side passing a wooden bridge over the Vardar river. The west city walls, the bridge and the river do not exist anymore as the city begun expanding westwards in the 20th century. Cavazza, outside the walls notices a few small houses and he is amazed by the hospitality of the neighborhood as they greet him with fresh baked bread. However, he notes that the setting is not very pleasing as close by *a caravan of carriages were unloading the city's filth*. Many other

[38] Hekimoglou p.36

sources agree with Cavazza, as the combination of narrow roads and hundreds of people tightly packed together resulted in a horrible odor. The anonymous clerk from Istanbul also informs us about the horrible smell of the city streets caused by *the human waste that comes running down from the Ottoman quarters that were higher on the hill*[39]. The lower quarters, close to the sea and under the Via Egnatia, where reserved primarily for Jews and the lower classes. The upper city, or as the Turks called it "Bair", was without a doubt the wealthiest and nicest neighborhood of the city, with lots of fresh air and running water coming from the mountains around. Cavazza noticed the poor living conditions on the lower side when he compared it to the upper city, where *a constant breeze blew through the marble columns and water runed fresh and cold.* It is perhaps only the upper city that Dutch traveler Jan Sommers sees and says that "*Salonica is a beautiful city with newbuild houses and clean streets"*[40].

Conclusion

In brief, 16th century Salonica can be summarized by rapid economic growth and huge influx of Jews from the west. The textile industry became the city's prized jewel, occupying mainly Jews and a portion of the Greek population. The city was built fast and with cheap materials to cover the huge demand, and as a result fires were a regular phenomenon for city dwellers. When citizens were not worrying about fires, they were busy cleaning their infested streets of the wastes from the Upper-City. Travelers tended to focus on the city's defense infrastructure and battle readiness, as usually authors did in travel writing[41]. In the second half of the 15th, the sources point that travelers were aware of Salonica's past as a Greek and Byzantine city, referencing the ancient columns and city walls. The Arch of Galerius, located on the east side, is particularly a favorite among visitors. After the arrival of the Sephardim, the scope of the city begun to change as synagogues and mosques were built next to, or replaced, churches. Now, Greeks are a group of a multi-cultural and diverse tri-part. This is evident by almost every source. "*The city has three types of people, Jews, Turks and Greeks but Jews are the most populous"* says Cavazza. "*Salonica might be as big as Constantinople, where here the majority of the population are Jews",* adds Jan

[39] Megas p.37

[40] Jan Sommer visited Salonica in 1592 and published his travelogue in the 1649 in Amsterdam with the tile "*Jan Somers Zee en Landt Reyse, Gedaen naer de Levante, Als Italien, Candien, Cypres, Egypten, Rhodes, Archipelago, Turckyen"*

[41] Hulme, P., & Youngs, T. (2002) p.45

Sommers. On the living conditions of the lower city, it seems paradoxical that the Jews, on one hand, were the main player of one of the most thriving fabric industries in Europe. But on the other hand, there is no mention of their material wealth, like good housing, expensive clothing etc. The Turks exist only in reference to the Sultan and the army while the Greeks are only mentioned as a group of people with no apparent agency in 16th century travelogues.

2. Salonica is opening up to Europe (17th century)

Most of the sources analyzed so far come from Italian visitors, whose connections with Salonica was established after centuries of trade with the region. By the 17th century, the Ottomans had secured their European footing in the eastern Mediterranean, thus they ruled over important sea routes and had exclusive control of the Silk Road. Europe had to adjust to the demands of its new powerful neighbor. Trade treaties were struck with France, the Holy Roman Empire and the English crown, to access the eastern markets. Consequently, Salonica begun to receive more travelers from West and Central Europe, as European merchants, ambassadors, priests or even curious aristocrats came for business in the city. In 1650, the French Embassy was founded in an area that would later be known as *Fragkomahalas* (Frankish Quarter). In this quarter, French schools, catholic missionaries, a bank and a Catholic Church changed once more the city scape of the city. As for Salonicans, Jewish scholarship flourished with widespread use of the printing press. A plethora of synagogues taught in Hebrew, Spanish, Italian and during the 17th century Salonica became an important center for the study of Kabbalah, Jewish apocryphism. This religious restlessness that characterized the city might also explain the wide appeal that the Sabbatian movement had in Salonica in the late 17th century. Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676) was an Ottoman Jew from Smyrna who proclaimed himself the long-awaited Jewish Messiah[42]. His declaration in 1665 marked the beginning of a widespread messianic movement that quickly gained followers across the Sephardic Jewish world. The Sabbatian movement, named after its leader, spread across major centers of Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire and Europe, including Izmir, Cairo, Istanbul,

[42] Mazaower (2004) p.91

Amsterdam, and Salonica. In Salonica, the impact of Sabbatai Zevi's message was especially significant, provoking intense religious fervor and community divisions.

The Sabbatian movement did not go unnoticed by travelers as there were several mentions in the second half of the 17th century. Sabbatai's reach in Salonica was significant and can be explained only by the apocryphal interests of the city's scholar circles. In the sources exist at least three accounts of two Christians and a Jew that traveled to the city to learn hidden cosmic truths about the nature of God and the real meaning behind the scriptures. It is this setting that attracted curious scholars and also nourished the messianic message of Sabbatai to Salonica's population. Travelers regarded him as a bizarre figure to say the least. Paul Rycaut, a British diplomat who visited Izmir and Salonica in the period 1689-1671 wrote "*There was no trade, or business conducted or any profitable work whatsoever. Everybody waited for this Messiah to provide whatever they desired"*[43] Another anonymous French traveler witnessed *"girls as young as 8 years old, were set for marriage and boys were circumcised right out of their mother's womb to prepare for the end of days"*[44]. Despite the craze around Sabbatai's persona, Ottoman authorities ordered him to choose between death or conversion to Islam. He chose the latter and with him converted many of his followers, and they would be called Donmeh, Turkish for "convert". Moshe Hai Kastiel, a Jewish pearl merchant from Istanbul would refer to the Donmeh as *the most bizarre folk since the followers of Jesus.*

From the late 17th century, southeastern Europe tended to be considered "exotic" because it was part of the Ottoman Empire. and on maps it was labelled "European Turkey", as a paradoxical part of Asia in Europe[45]. Travelers were looking for distinctive signs, that they knew existed in the East, e.g. mosques and camels, drunken people and dirty streets. The difference between 'western' and 'eastern' depended on where the travelers themselves turned their attention. When the Hellenists travelled to Athens and focused their attention on the Parthenon, Greece did indeed seem very 'western' to them. In contrast, Salonica, whose Byzantine churches had been converted into mosques - seemed integrated into in the 'East'. Most visitors were looking for elements of exoticism that they expected to find in an 'eastern' city. In 18th-century Europe, the concept of "the East" had

[43] Megas p.61
[44] Hekimoglou p.58
[45] Mazaower (2004) p.75

been formed as opposed to 'civilization', which crystallized a set of values such as the prospects of trade, social well-being, polite manners etc.

This "eastern" concept was also magnified by the interaction that travelers had with the locals. Particularly, "guides", Salonicans who showed travelers around the city, reproducing "eastern" cultural norms and, arguably, showing Salonica in a way that the visitor wanted to see. A phenomenon that is still noticeable today, in one of many manifestations of modern-day tourism. This cultural dynamic of westerners projecting "eastern" values and mannerisms to people of the Levant and beyond, Edward Said would identify as "Orientalism" in his homonymous book in 1979[46]. While Orientalism as a set of "*ideas embedded with doctrines of European superiority"*[47] would be unveiled fully in the late 18th and 19th century, it important to notice its beginnings. Maybe no other form of cultural expression reproduced the idea of the Orient to such extent as travel writing did. Theologian and Capuchin monk, Robert de Dreux, visited Salonica in 1669. He was the chaplain of the French embassy in Constantinople at the time when Haye-Vantelet was ambassador. His proper name was Robert Vantelet, which might indicate kinship with the aforementioned ambassador. De Dreux, was a member of a numerous delegation, which accompanied the French ambassador from Constantinople to Salonica. The purpose of the diplomatic mission was to renew the trade agreements between France and the Sublime Porte, which had been temporarily suspended by King Louis XIV of France. When De Dreux entered the city, he was spotted by "*a revered Jew, who as he saw me, exited his shop and greeted me by taking the end of my mantle and kissing it".* Amazed, De Dreux asked why he deserved such a welcoming, to whom the revered Jew replied: *"It is a characteristic of our city, home of so many different religious dogmas".* Whether truth or fiction, De Dreux's account continues in a stereotypic fashion in which he describes the house of the revered Jew after he invited them for coffee. Rags, floor pillows and a variety of dried fruits and nuts were served to them as cardamom and the scent of coffee filled the room. These forms of eastern depictions referred not so often to Salonica as in Istanbul, Cairo or Palestine in the following centuries.

[46] Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism* (First Vintage Books ed.). Vintage Books.
[47] Ibid p. 11

Past and Present

One of the most toured European travelers, William Lithgow, was born around 1582 in the village of Lanark in Scotland. A love disappointment at the age of 25 was the reason he began his long journeys alone and on foot. Leaving Scotland and after a short wander through the countries of Central Europe, he settled in Paris for ten months. From there, on March 7, 1609, he set out to travel around the then world in a wanderlust adventure that lasted a full 19 years. His travels took place in three periods. The first from 1609 to 1613, the second from 1614 to 1616 and the third from 1620 to 1627. In 1609, as part of his first journey, he visited Greece. He toured the Peloponnese, Crete and the islands of the Archipelago. He visited Euboea and from there he arrived in Thessaloniki most likely in the same year. He documented his journeys in his memoirs, published in 1632. A reprinted version was published in 1906, in Glasgow under the name "*The Rare Adventures of William Lithgow*".

Lithgow acknowledges the history of Salonica as once a Greek, later Venetian and now Ottoman city. He does not refer to the city as fabric producing center but as a *"prestigious city, full of merchandise of every kind".* By the 17th century, the city's port and fabric export must have made the Salonica quite famous in Europe, Lithgow notes *"Salonica compares to Naples and now has become an international center of Jews, who have absolute control of the city".* Lithgow's explanation for this dominance is that *the Jews lent Suleyman the Magnificent a sum of 2 million* (he does not mention currency) to aid his campaign in Hungary. As a guarantee the sultan gave the Jews control of the area. Lithgow is not the only one that feels the need to explain the apparent strong Jewish agency in Salonica. Haji Kalfa, one of the only two ottoman travel sources in this research, probably visited Salonica in the period 1635-1640. Kalfa also remembers the purchase of Salonica by the Venetians. His explanation for Salonica's influential Jewish presence is that *it is a gift from God for their long suffering*[48]. The other Ottoman source, Evliya Çelebi, who was a chronographer and traveler, was quite caustic in his version. Çelebi visited Salonica in 1667. In his book, *Tarikh-I Seyyah* (Traveler's Chronicle) he introduces a whole new narrative about Salonica's history. Çelebi is known for blending oral tradition and myths to his chronicles, so his accounts should be taken with a grain of salt. *"Salonica",* says, *"was built by Solomon, before the birth of Christ…and he (Solomon) entrusted the government of the city to his first-born son.*

[48] Megas (2018) p.46

Nabuchanezar, who was baptized by John, when he learned that that the Jews killed him (John the Baptist) he marched from Kurdistan with 5000 Greeks to Judaea and slayed hundreds of Jews." According to Çelebi, those Jews fled to Salonica, pushed away the Greek inhabitants and later got into many confrontations with the Venetians, until the Ottoman "liberated" the city.

In Lithgow, Kalfa and Çelebi we find an increasing interest in travelers to provide their readers with an explanation on why Salonica has such a big Jewish population. Regardless of their historicity, 17th century travelers understood the peculiarity of Salonica's population and wanted to share this impression with their readers. Greeks begin to have less and less agency in the city as the sources begin to refer to them only in relation to churches, a tendency that will continue until the late 19th century.

An interesting aspect of Salonican everyday life we encounter often in travel accounts is the use of the Spanish language. Ladino, as the locals called it, is Spanish mixed with Hebrew vocabulary and until the 19th century it used to be written in the Hebrew alphabet. Diego Galán, a Spanish sailor and well-known author, who visited Salonica in 1592, noted that *in this city (Salonica) the Jews speak refined and correct Spanish, like they do in the imperial city of Toledo*[49]. Another Spaniard, Alonso de Contreras, a few years later, seemed to communicate just fine with the Jews in Salonica as he was asking for directions and buying supplies for his voyage. Another traveler, Leandro Tisanio, who came to Salonica in 1611, with the intention of studying the Bible in Hebrew, writes: "*they have devoted all their time in learning the Scripture, but they speak Spanish like princes do*[50]*".* The use of Spanish was also reinforced by trade, as Jews kept their old trade networks, Ladino was used almost exclusively in the areas surrounding the port, where coincidently the Jewish quarters were. By the 18th century, however this admiration for Salonicean Spanish speakers was no more. As decades past Ladino and Imperial Spanish seems like they grew quite apart. A report on Salonica the Jesuit Order in 1733 says: *"It seems that no Jew here speaks Hebrew. Also, their language is broken Spanish with a bad accent".* To be fair, this report is accredited to a French missionary by the name of Jean Baptiste Souciet, who was the head of the Jesuit Order in Salonica from 1726 to 1733[51].

[49] Megas p.37
[50] Megas p.40
[51] Hekimoglou p. 60

Cityscape and Population

With respect to places of religious worship, the Jews were clearly superior in terms of their density throughout the city. Çelebi notes that one of the grandest sites to see in Salonica was the Talmud Torah, the largest synagogue and educational institution of the city. Travelers knew that Salonica was a Jewish educational center, attracting many students and scholars from the Balkans and Europe. Many of the synagogues located in almost every neighborhood offered education, said Antoine Morison, a French traveler, in1698. *"There are 48 neighborhoods of Muslims, 16 of infidels (Christians)…and 56 Jewish neighborhoods"* notes Çelebi. Out of the 33.000 houses that exist in Salonica, 100.000 thousand Jews live in them, Çelebi says in an exaggerating manner. Another German traveler noticed more than 80 synagogues in 1660, a number that we encounter often in travel accounts referring to Salonica. The number of synagogues in the city at the time is quite difficult to verify. Official Ottoman records have proven inaccurate, for the reason being that it was in the best interest of communities to hide the exact number of people and property to avoid additional taxes. This is the reason why in sources we find the amount of Jewish or Christian population not by persons but by families. A head of a family equaled approximately 15 people[52]. Vincenzo Coronelli, a venetian traveler and geographer, who visited in 1675 said that "*that the streets are narrow and dirty. Nevertheless, the traffic in town is significant…especially around the areas of worship"*. Cornonelli counted 48 mosques, to which he notes that the most important ones were once churches. Particularly the Cathedral of Saint Demetrius and Ayia Sophia, which mistakenly says that the latter was built by Justinian, clearly confused with the Ayia Sophia of Istanbul. The important aspect in Coronelli's accounts is that he mentions 36 large synagogues but makes clear that there were a lot more smaller ones. An observation that explains the large number of synagogues mentioned in other accounts.

Now, according to Tabakis' list of sources, there are 5 accounts that mention in detail Christian churches and Christians in general and not just acknowledge their existence in the 17th century[53]. Three of them are anonymous German travelers from 1665 to 1667. It is unclear why only the German accounts are anonymous or why they are so close chronologically to each other. Most

[52] Mazower (2004) p. 53
[53] Tabaki (1992) p. 200-204

likely they were missionaries travelling to Salonica, given that they treat monasteries in Salonica and the surrounding areas. Their accounts were found in the Archive of the Public Library in Thessaloniki. One of the German travelers, in particular, said that *"it is a sad spectacle (Bild) to see Christians begging outside of the chapel, they gather there every Sunday"*. It is a mystery if the German missionaries were Catholic or Protestant. My guess would be the former, since Protestants in the 17th century were advocating increasingly against mendicancy, and a site like the congregation of beggars outside a church must have stricken him. Begging outside of Churches was a usual site in Salonica well into the 20th century.

The most detailed source that refers to Christians in the 17th century was that of Sieur de la Croix, secretary and advisor to the French Ambassador in Istanbul. He was born in France in 1610. In 1673 he took part in the renewal of the Treaty of Adrianople between the French government and Sultan Mehmet IV. As the official interpreter of the French government, he translated the articles of the treaty into French. During his stay in Constantinople, he made several trips to the Ottoman Empire, and the chronicles of his tours were published in 1684 in Paris. He visited Salonica in 1679. De La Croix's accounts on Salonica's churches and monastic life have puzzled researchers for quite some time. That is because some of the churches he mentions cannot be identified precisely. This could mean an alternative nomenclature of Salonica's Churches in the second half of the 17th century or most likely a mistake by him. However, it is hard to dismiss his accounts. He is very informed on the major religious buildings of the city and gives details to his readers on the layout of churches, figures on how much they pay in tax and which churches were converted to mosques. In particular, he noted in a clearly sarcastic manner: *"The Turks have many beautiful mosques in this city, namely the churches of Ayia Sophia, St. Gabriel, Virgin and St Dimitrius."*

Perhaps the most interesting part of De la Croix's impressions of Salonica are his details on Salonica's women, and particularly, nuns, de la Croix provided detailed descriptions of female monastic institutions, such as the Monastery of Saint Theodora or Saint Mary's (Parthenou). He noted that these monasteries functioned not only as religious centers but also as educational institutions for young women. The girls residing there received religious and possibly secular education, and interestingly, some of them were not bound by permanent vows, allowing them the option to leave the monastery to marry.

"There are a hundred girls, or about a hundred in each, who are not nuns and leave the convent when they want to marry."[54]

Clothing and fabric industry

The fabric industry continued to flourish throughout the 17th century. Wool products from Salonica were on high demand in Italy and the European Ottoman Empire. Travelers now refer to Salonica as an established trade port. Don Pedro Perasidasbassan, a Venetian merchant and courtier states "*Salonica's port lacks nothing compared to Istanbul."* A little further down on his report to the Venetian governor of Corfu, "*I pretended that I was a Greek merchant and gave some coins to some Turks to get me in contact with the Jewish wool merchants stationed by the port".* I think it is quite entertaining to picture a Venetian diplomat impersonating a Greek merchant, however we must try to imagine how crowded Salonica's port usually was. Next to it, the Jewish quarter was full of shops, carriers and sewing fabricas. Residencies close to the port were fully operating sewing factories. People came in and out of these houses so frequently that the Jewish quarter reminded the industrial complex of Manchester, wrote Lewes Roberts, an English merchant in 1630[55]. Matthias Puel, an Austrian military officer and travel writer, wrote: *"There must be around six hundred textile factories…to distinguish one another the Jews wear a yellow belt, the Christians blue and Turks wear white. This is their only difference"*[56] As Nicolay observed in mid-16th century, the color distinctions remain the same century later with the difference being that Puel mentions belts where Nicolay saw turbans. Even so, George Sandys, an English poet and well-known travel writer, who visited Salonica in 1611, saw no such distinctions as forementioned.

"Their (Jews) clothing has little differences with the Turks, made from purple cloth. They wear coats on top of that of the same color with wide sleeves, tied up (the coats) around the neck. They (Jews) wear high hats without a strap and they tilt it whenever they greet someone. They also shave their head, like the Turks[57]*"*

[54] Hekimoglou p.54
[55] Megas. 45
[56] ibid p.47
[57] Ibid. p. 47

Sandys most likely came in contact with upper-class Jews, since purple cloth was quite expensive and was regarded as a color worn by nobility[58]. This might also explain why Sandys felt the need to explain that they shave their head like Muslims did, in an effort to look like the Turks, the upper class of early modern Salonica. Sandys is the only source of the 17th century that speaks into such detail about the appearance of Turks and Jews, quite strange considering that the custom of shaving one's head among laymen would have been very strange to a European at the time. This is another indication that Sandy's might have met only members of Salonica's high society.

In the 17th century travelers also come in contact more often not just with laymen but also with the religious caste of the city. Missionaries and diplomats in some shared impressions on the clothing of nuns and priests. Even though, the priestly attire is not very impressionable, De la Croix, in one of his visits to a monastery noted: "*(the nuns) wear total black attire, with a thin veil of the same color*". Robert De Dreux, the French chaplain from earlier, who encountered the same nuns from the monastery of Saint Theodora shared a similar description. Another, Olfert Dapper, a Dutch geographer and travel writer, never visited Salonica but wrote a popular imaginary travel tale to Greece in 1689. In his imagination, Salonica's Jews had locks stretching to the height of their chest and the women walked barefoot on the Sabbath.

Conclusion

To summarize 17th century impressions of the city. Surviving travel accounts are almost double compared to the 16th. This is due to the larger influx of visitors to the city thanks to the French Embassy and the development of trade with the West. The Jewish population became not only a central reference point for travelers but also the leading population group. Trade and fabric production became synonymous with the Jewish quarter of the city located right next to the port. Travelers, especially Turkish ones, feel the need to explain to their readers why the Jewish population is so large compared to the other two groups. They achieve that explanation by blending fact with fiction. On the other hand, western travel accounts on Salonica, especially from English and French authors, begin to have expected depictions of "eastern" people in their descriptions. Chavy Greek businessmen, humble and knowledgeable elder Jews or indifferent and cruel Ottoman officials start to become a caricature knit and cut for travel writing. This would be much

[58] Naar, D. E. (2016). *Jewish Salonica: between the Ottoman Empire and modern Greece* (1st ed.). Stanford University Press p.98

more apparent in larger ottoman cities like Istanbul or Izmir. Nevertheless, the image of the Levant begins to form in western European imagination and the Ottoman Empire is the frontier of a backward and mysterious world that is the Orient.

On the living conditions of the city, the unsanitary streets on the lower part of the city still leave an impression. However, compared to the 16th century, some sources like Lithgow, show an antisemitic sentiment in their depictions of Jews, relating them to the filth. This does not mean that antisemitism did not exist before the period in review, but it becomes more evident in the 17th century with language referring to Jews as filth or dishonest people etc. The Sabbatian movement was mentioned in many sources, further dividing the population in the eyes of Salonica's visitors. Where once there were three groups, now the Donmeh stand as a fourth bizarre and in-between category, with eschatological expectations.

Christian missionaries and diplomats imply the contemporary Greek presence in relation to Orthodoxy and monastic life. This is a step up compared to the 16th century, where Greeks were mentioned even less. However, we observe a shift from the perception of a "once Greek city gone Ottoman". Many travelers do not recall so much the Greek Byzantine past of the city and instead portray the more recent venetian occupation before the Ottoman Conquest. Despite this change of scope, travelers recount and emphasize mosques that were originally churches. Some of them report it bitterly while others sarcastically. Also worth mentioning in this century of travel accounts is the appearance of Christian women, namely nuns. The monastery of Agia Theodora in particular appears in 5 sources, suggesting that Churches become a pole of attraction and reference for Christian travelers coming to the city.

Salonica's ancient Greek past would return as central theme in travelogues in the next century. The Enlightenment would reinvent European perceptions of culture and history. In the 18th century, as we will discuss in the next chapter, Greco-Roman antiquity would become the prime reason for visiting Salonica and Greece in general

The monastery of Agia Theodora c.1910 (https://agiatheodora.gr/) (26/5/2025 11.40)

3. Salonica in the classicistic period (18th century)

By the 18th century, travel became more widespread and safer, as Europe resolved major conflicts like the French Wars of Religion or the Thirty-Year war. The centralization of state power in the west, most notably England and France, during the 18th century, ushered an era of cultural competition. Monarchs spared no expense for arts and science. Expeditions were dispatched to discover and chart new territory, namely in the New World. Scholars and academics founded societies all over Europe to promote knowledge and research, especially regarding the classic and roman period. The Society of Antiquaries was founded in London in the beginning of the 18th century. Académie des Sciences was founded in France by Louis XIV in 1666. In many other institutions like these, ideas of the Enlightenment such as secularism and rationalism promoted a worldview outside of Christian tradition. European thought found its roots in pre-Christian, Greek and Roman literature and material culture, disregarding its Christian medieval past. Traveling Europeans came to Greece and Italy, with expectations of classical grandeur and beauty. The east, seen through the lens of classical heritage, was transformed into a cultural destination of unparalleled importance.

Now, traveling to south and east was a popular activity among nobility in Western Europe. Young aristocrats, scholars and soldiers of fortune began to draw itineraries across the Mediterranean and the middle east in search of adventure. Traveling customs like "the Grand Tour", a rite of passage for nobles across western Europe, particularly England and France, helped define travelling as a process of refinement. This ceremonial journey to the south also asserted noble status symbolizing wealth and elite identity. In the context of the growing colonial empires of England and France, travelling meant also dominance and superiority. Travelers were intrigued by ancient Greco-Roman culture and searched for ancient ruins, lost cities mentioned in Homeric epics and all kinds of classical pottery, coins etc. Within this orientalist framework, Salonica was perceived as a living palimpsest, where the echoes of Alexander the Great, Roman emperors, and Byzantine patriarchs could be discerned beneath the rhythms of Ottoman urban life. Travelers were drawn to the city not only for its monuments but also for its vibrant cosmopolitanism. Home to significant Jewish, Greek, and Muslim populations, Salonica embodied the cultural hybridity that both fascinated and unsettled the European imagination. Ambassadors, scholars, missionaries, and antiquarians ventured into its streets in search of manuscripts, ruins, coins, inscriptions, and oral histories. Europeans searched for objects and narratives through which to reconstruct an idealized classical past. As Enlightenment Europe looked eastward to recover the glories of antiquity, Salonica offered both the promise of discovery and the complexity of a living, multi-ethnic city. However grand and inspiring antiquity was to European imagination, classical material culture was also a goldmine for westerners. Many of the travel sources we will review in this chapter come from travelers who filled craters to the brim with coins, pottery and even whole statues, to take back home as prized possessions. This habit of expropriation would damage irredeemably the archeological integrity of classical material culture all over the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, in Greece especially, displacement of antiquities would continue on greater scale and peak in the years after the Greek war of independence in the early 19th century.

Salonica continued to have a key role in the Ottoman textile industry, but by the late 1600s, competition with the western textile producing behemoths like England and the Low Countries, made Salonica a comparatively small player in the European markets[59]. This is due to the massive scale on which western powers imported materials from the East, and later on, from the Americas.

[59] Mazower (2004) p. 80-81

Another major factor is that the Ottoman army, the biggest client of Salonica's textile industry by far, did not need as much wool for military clothing. The Ottoman Empire, after the 18th century, simply stopped fighting large scale wars as it did in previous centuries. Thus, Salonica's importance as a fabric producing powerhouse lost its wider European reach. In this case, this is evident by the noticeable drop in travel accounts from merchants in the 18th century. In the place of merchants and trade spokesmen, Salonica welcomed scholars, artists and history enthusiasts who showed interest in the city's unique blend of cultures, manifested in architecture, ancient statues beside a hammam and a plethora of temples from three different religions.

Cityscape and Population

Paul Lucas was an art dealer born in 1664 in Rouen, France. His father was a jewelry dealer, which proved to be a very positive factor in his later career as an antiquities dealer and art collector. From 1699 to 1714, by order of Louis XIV, Lucas made three journeys to Eastern countries, with the ultimate goal of finding inscriptions, coins and ancient artifacts. He did not acquire any particular education. His three traveling annals, which caused a sensation in early 18th century Europe, were not written by him, but by scholars who were members of the French Academy of Inscriptions and Fine Arts. He visited Salonica in 1705, on his last tour.

Lucas -more precisely, his writer - describes a once great but now deserted city. From the beginning of his account, his classical scope is evident as he refers to the city as *Thessaloniki, also known as Salonica.* It is important to highlight that the previous source that refers to the city by its full Greek name was in the early 16th century. His first mention on the city's cityscape is the Arch of Galerius, which praises for being *meticulously built.* He continues describing the city walls and some columns scattered around the city center and expresses his disappointment, as *they were abandoned for centuries.*

Furthermore, Lucas goes into great detail about Churches, describing St Demetrius Cathedral and Ayia Sophia. In a similar sarcastic tone, as Robert De Dreux had a few decades prior, he said "*the greatest buildings that this city has to offer are mosques, which most of them were churches before the Ottomans conquered the city"*[60]. Rotunda, a Roman temple very close to the Arch of Galerius, that over the years functioned as a church and later as a mosque, also catches Lucas' attention,

[60] Megas p.64

which he compares to the Pantheon in Rome. Lucas shares a piece of history for every major building he describes, highlighting the Greco-Roman element of the city. Even when describing St Demetrius, he claims that he saw an inscription on a high point close to the church that reminded him "*the old glory days of Greece".* Research has not found any other source which confirms Lucas on this one. Even so his credibility is questionable at best, given the fact that he pretended to be a doctor in Salonica to make his ancient coin search easier. In his words: *"So, I pretended to be a doctor. But the serious kind with a refined taste. I treated only diseases of women. I visited only the most respectable, the most beautiful, and the most vulgar women, in return for coins"*[61].

Lastly, Lucas says that Salonica's population a large number Greeks, close to 10.000. However, on his next sentence notes: *"There are also 30.000 Jews who have 22 synagogues"*[62]. It is clear that for Lucas, Jewish presence in Salonica, expressed in the dozens of synagogues and the use of Spanish in most parts of the city, does not intrigue him, while Turks exist in his account only in relation to mosques.

Aubry de la Motraye was a French traveler, military man and diplomat. He was born in 1674 in France. He received excellent education and began at an early age touring the various royal courts, as an advisor and attendant to the rulers of Europe. In 1727 he published at Den Haag a chronicle of his tours. The chronicle consists of two volumes and contains notes and observations from his travels. It is the only travel source on Salonica that indicates the year in which the journey was made. De la Motraye visited Thessaloniki on 15 September 1707, returning from Santorini and Andros. His intention was to return to Constantinople via Adrianople[63].

Motraye describes a beautiful city with well-built houses and great infrastructure. *"Salonica is a great commercial urban center and is populated by Turks, Greeks, Armenians and Jews"* he adds. Motraye too says that the most captivating sites in the city are mosques that used to be churches. He goes into some detail on mosaics and Christian iconography inside mosques, which were damaged by the Ottomans. *"The churches that belong to the Greeks today are insignificant, so in every other city (of the Ottoman Empire)".* He then shares his impressions of the city walls around the city. His itinerary began from the Upper city, at the Yedi Kule fortress and ended at the sea

[61] Hekimoglou (2008) p.59
[62] Megas (2018) p.66
[63] Hekimoglou (2008) p. 60

walls, where he encountered the White Tower. At this stage, I must point out that mentions of the White Tower are almost non-existent before the 18th century, which is strange given the fact that it was built between 1450-1470 and stood more than 30 meters tall. The White Tower was the epicenter of the city's seaside defense, located at the eastern outskirts of Salonica, embedded in ancient walls. Motraye, like Lucas, mentioned ancient columns and abandoned roman structures around the city. At the end of his description, he does not miss the chance to let his reader know that he bought 23 silver coins from the Hellenistic era for cheap.

As evident by the two sources above, travelers in the 18th century tended to look almost exclusively at the city's antiquities, informing their readers about an Ottoman city, that had an abundance of classical material culture. I argue that this scope contains two key aspects. One is the broader European interest in classical Greece, which compels the traveler to provide to his readers with up-close accounts on Salonica's monuments. By extension, the second is that this classical portrayal of Salonica provided information about the location and the state of antiquities to other soldiers of fortune. In many travel accounts, the authors inform the readers about coins, statues or stone tablets which they acquired. The presentation of Salonica as an Oriental city with little to no regard for its ancient monuments was basically an open invitation for Europe's upper classes to come to Greece and take back with them a piece of history. While it is impossible to know the real intentions of past authors, many of them abide by this pattern of local disdain for antiquities right before they expound on their acquisitions. Paul Lucas, returning to Paris, brought with him enough Greek coins and artifacts to fill six rooms in his office. We know this from a letter by one of his close friends in 1732, expressing the amazement of Luca's collection[64].

Opportunism aside, Greece, and Salonica in particular, attracted scholars and travelers with genuine interest in its multicultural and diverse architectural make up. Englishmen James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, graduates of the School of Fine Arts in Rome, with studies in archaeology and architecture, visited Thessaloniki in late 1753, in search of archaeological finds, which they would record and reproduce in drawings and engravings. Their visit to Thessaloniki was part of a wider tour of mainland and island Greece, which began in 1751 and ended in 1754. Stuart and Revett published *The Antiquities of Athens* in 1762 in London, which contains drawings and impressions from the entirety of their travels in Greece. While most of their work revolves around

[64] Hekimoglou (2008) p.58

Athens, we must assume that the choice of the title was a publicity maneuver, as Athens was the absolute manifestation of European classical imagination at the time.

Stuart and Revett portray a city in which ruins of the past co-exist with people of the present. They mention houses built on the side of the wall structure, as well as byzantine-era buildings on the east side of town, that were used as kiosks for people to rest their horses and cattle. The Englishmen seems that they've spent enough time with the locals as they expound on a local myth about the origin of a stone column, dating to the 4th century. Salonicans called the column Yilan Mermer (Snake Column), which according to local folklore, was the nest of a giant snake living in the area. They were also impressed by a group of Roman sculptures called Las Incantadas (Magemenes in Greek). These sculptures were located at the Jewish Quarter of the city, incorporated in the house structure of a wealthy Jewish merchant, who Stuart and Revett paid a visit during their trip, escorted by the British consul of Salonica. They were called "Las Incantadas" -The Enchanted- because Turks thought they were created by magic. What is evident in Stuart and Revett is the intertwin of Greek and Ottoman populations, blending local myths and traditions to produce a unique culture.

In the famous engraving (A.G. Papaioannou Collection), Peter Paradise, British consul in Salonica, accompanies the travelers James Stuart and Nicholas Revett to the courtyard of the house where the famous colonnade of the "Enchanted" was erected. The tour guides wait for him at the edge of the courtyard, beside a bush, with his dragoman (translator), who is holding the consul's son, little John. The consul is greeted by the elder tenant of the house. Perhaps his name was Mordechai.

A few years before, in 1740, another Englishman named Richard Pococke, published his very successful work *A Description of the East and some other Countries.* Pococke passed through Salonica on his way to the Holy Mountain. His impressions of the city also focus on churches, like St Demetrius and Ayia Sophia, while he dedicates quite a number of pages describing the antiquities of Salonica. Most notably the Arch of Galerius and Las Incantadas, which he too depicts in his work. The reason I mention Pococke's work is because scholars have pointed out his extensive plagiarism of other authors who visited Salonica and the Holy Mountain[65]. Namely, Dutch cartographer Frederick de Wit, who visited in 1704. This indicates the existence of a large corpus on Salonica's cityscape by the early 18th century.

[65] Hekimoglou (2008), Dimitriadis (2011), Papageorgiou (1913), Theocharidis (1974)

As we have discussed, Lucas, Motraye, Stuart, and Revett primarily concentrated on the Greek elements of Salonica in their accounts. However, it is important to note that none of them appear to have had direct contact with the local Greek population. Instead, Motraye, Stuart, and Revett were guided through the city by Jewish intermediaries, a pattern likely shared by Pococke as well. All these travelers consistently observed that the Jewish community constituted the largest segment of the city's population. Despite this, travel reports from the early 18th century suggest a general decline in the overall population.

For instance, a Jesuit account from 1735 estimates the population of Salonica at approximately 40,000, broken down into roughly 19,000 Jews, 10,000 Christians (including Greeks and Armenians), and 10,000 to 11,000 Muslims[66]. However, these figures are most likely inaccurate, as they appear to be based on official Ottoman records, which were often manipulated or incomplete. A firman issued in 1728, for example, puts Salonica's population at around 38,000 to 40,000 subjects. In contrast, a report by the French ambassador to Salonica, Joseph d'Évant, in 1768, claims that the city housed between 65,000 and 70,000 inhabitants, along with over 6,000 Janissaries stationed there[67]. Each religious and ethnic group in the city tended to underreport their actual numbers to the Ottoman authorities, primarily as a means of avoiding taxation. These inconsistencies underscore the loose grip that the Ottoman state had on its periphery. The 18th century, historians claim, was the beginning of the end for an empire once controlling a quarter of Eurasia.

There is also a tendency to refer to more ethnic/religious groups by the 18th century. Vasily Grigorovich-Barksy, a Russian aristocrat, reported in 1726 that Salonica is populated by four different ethnicities: *Greeks, Francs, Turks and Jews.* Francs, refer to the Donmeh, followers of Sabbatai Zevi, after one of his disciples, Jacob Franc, who continued his messianic teachings. Other sources refer to the Donmeh also as Mamin, meaning believers in Turkish. The Donmeh percentage of Salonica's population is unclear, as travel and official sources do not provide a consistent figure. The apparent reason for this ambiguity is that the Donmeh could easily be confused for both Jews and Muslims. This confusion is expressed in some travel sources, which discuss Donmeh doctrine. For example, Greek travelers Daniel Philipidis and Grigoris Konstantas

[66] Megas (2018) p.67
[67] Ibid. p. 80

seem conflicted to witness "*men in fez (type of Muslim hat) resting on a Sabbath"*[68]. Another German traveler, Adolf Sturtzenbecker, said in 1784, *"I tried to find similarities or differences between them (Francs) and Turks in their religious duties, in an effort to better understand them…they dress like Muslims, but their "Jewish face" gives them away"*[69]. By the late 18th century travelers also recognize, confusingly enough, Franks, referring to the population living in Fragomahalas, the catholic quarter of the city. Interest in the "Frankish Quarter" would peak in the 19th century, when banks and a modern trade center would open shop, influenced by Europeans residing there. To this day, the area that once was the financial district of 19th century Salonica, is called Trade Square (Πλατεία Εμπορίου).

Clothing and Fabric Industry

The fabric industry in Salonica continued to be a regular mention for visiting travelers. As in the centuries prior, Jews were synonymous with production, process and trade of textile goods. Joseph de la Porte, a French cleric and author, who visited in 1737 wrote *trade is very developed here and run entirely by the Jews.* Jewish agency in the textile business was by now not just an observation but an established fact. Industry moguls like the Modiano or Alatini families dominated for years in Salonica and the Balkans. Both families trace their origins in Sephardi refugees from Spain and Italy.

By late 18th and early 19th century modern industrialization would further uphold Salonica's position as a major textile producer in the empire. However, the rest of Europe was just on another level. England, the Low Countries and France were decades ahead in technology from their eastern counterparts. However, that did not mean that Salonica did not try to compete. Francois Tarillon, a French cleric, with an apparent kin interest in French-Ottoman trade relations wrote in 1735: "*The Grand Turk has sent many Jews to our lands in the years before to try to copy our weaving techniques and bring them to Turkey".* Back in 1630, an English merchant and member of the Levant Company[70] reported a similar story, noting: *"They (Jews) set weavers in their homes and produce clothes imitating Suffolk fabrics, hurting the sales of kersies (type of shirt) in Turkey"*[71].

[68] Megas (2018) p.86
[69] Megas (2018) p.92
[70] The Levant Company was created by decree of Elizabeth I in 1592. Like the VOC, the Levant company traded in spices, gold, silk and especially currants and coffee.
[71] Megas (2008) p.45

Paul Lucas, who pretended to be a doctor to get ancient coins, also reported that "*Two consecutive viziers decided to make production of French type fabrics a priority for Salonica's weavers. This was part of an attempt to make the Turks look more European. They spent a lot of resources, but they did not succeed".* There is a clear discontent of travelers of English and French travelers about Salonica's production choices. Reports like these did not exist before mid-17th century. Accounts become more specific and have a tone of inspection or evaluation on production capacity and quality. They are clearly linked to the founding of trade companies in the west.

It is evident that travelers, especially merchants, who came in the 18th century, were well aware of Salonica's textile market. Many sources also report on the special treatment that Salonicean Jews received in taxation in return for their services. The Sultan relied on Salonica's almost solely on Salonica's wool production for the clothing of troops stationed in the European part of the Empire. Jean Baptist Souciet, a member of the Jesuit order in Salonica, wrote in 1738, "*the Jews get special treatment for producing wool for the Janissary corps of the Grand Turk…They are in charge of almost all production of wool in the city".* Thomas de Jonville, French Ambassador in Salonica from 1743 to 1752, attests to the apparent Jewish monopoly on wool production disclosing that *"they have the right to exclude anyone else from buying or selling wool in the city, until they meet the sultan's quota."*[72] Sources agree to the price of 12 asper per piece of wool, a number that barely exceeded the cost of production, but automatically kept anyone else from competing for patronage by the sultan. This posed as double-edged sword for Jews. On one hand they had complete control of production and a huge regular client in the Ottoman army. On the other hand, the set price of wool did not allow for Salonica's textile industry to develop in the rate of its European counterparts. Jonville explains that Jews, despite their dominance, were also economic captives of this system because if they raised the price, "*the Janissaries, in who they relied for their protection, would not like that at all"*[73].

At this point, it is imperative to acknowledge the fact that Salonica's 18th century economy was not based solely on fabric production. Travelers mention a diverse market that produced and dealt in tobacco, grains and building material to name a few. Guillaume Thomas Raynal, a French cleric and historian, wrote in 1770 that *"(Salonica) is the trade center of the East. Tobacco leaves come*

[72] Megas (2018) p.79
[73] Ibid.

here from Syria, Egypt and Moria (Peloponnese)…they blend it here, so it won't be so harsh"[74]. Tabacco in particular seems to be quite an export in Salonica. At least four other accounts mention tobacco processing and export in the 18th century.

Accounts on clothing in the 18th century become more detailed and usually follow reports on the textile industry as discussed above. The emerging Jewish bourgeoisie class and their choices of clothing captured traveler attention, as class was becoming a distinctive factor in Salonicean society. Trade and industrialization in its early stages in late 18th century meant that clothing signified not only religion but class as well. For instance, travelers frequently commented on the contrast between local garments and those typical of Western Europe, thus emphasizing the broader themes of Westernization and cultural exchange that were prevalent in the 18th century. French traveler, Esprit-Marie Cousinery, wrote in 1792, claimed that he could apart rich Jewish merchants from other Jews because they wore *French coats and English shoes.* He later explains that Salonica's lower classes had to make clothes with what was left of fabrics after exports to Europe and the Sublime Porte. Richard Pococke also attests to this trickle-down economy of clothing, "*They (jews) produce rough wool to dress the janissary corps- which they also export to the rest of the empire for the commoners".* Joseph d'Evant notes that high profile individuals in Salonicean society could be spotted just by the quality and color of their scarfs and turbans.

Travelers still share their impressions on the traditional colors that distinguished the population based on religion. That is, yellow for Jews, blue for Greeks and white for Muslims. However, profession and class seem to overlap these distinctions, as Jews wanted to dress more like Turks, and they wanted to dress more like Europeans. Carriers (hamal) and ship builders at the docks of Salonica's port wore more or less the same clothes and one could maybe distinguish them by the color of their turbans[75].

It is very strange that travelers, despite their heightened interests in Greek and Roman material culture in the 18th century, do not report anything about the attire of Neo-Greeks in Salonica. Needless to say, that by the early 19th century philhellenism and the Greek revolution would inspire countless reports and paintings of contemporary Greeks. English aristocrat Lord Byron is probably the most famous European aristocrat and traveler that wrote about Greece during the war of

[74] Hekimoglou (2008) p.76
[75] Megas (2018) p.109

independence. French painter Eugene de la Croix also expressed his impressions of Greek clothing in his works. However, imagined Greeks did not apparently exist all the way up to Salonica, where the Ottomans stayed in power until 1912.

Past and Present

It is clear enough that the 18th century is a turning point for European historical perception of Salonica. Knowledge of the city's ancient Greek origins were arguably evident throughout the early modern period. The 18th century witnessed a resurgence of classical perceptions of Greece in general, a tendency that began in the 16th century, as seen in the accounts of Nicolas de Nicolay and Ciriaco dei Pizzecolli. Often travelers refer to the city as once an urban center of the Macedonian Empire. Acquisitions or reports of antiquities and ancient material culture usually are accompanied by small historical overview or dating. Motraye wrote "*I bought Greek silver, 23 silver coins, which did not cost me much, since their price corresponded to the actual value of the material. However, they were very common, i.e. Philip of Macedonia, Alexander the Great, Antoninus the Pious, Andrian, Diocletian, Julia Augusta, Faustina, etc."*[76].

Christianity is also highlighted as travelers remark that the city's grandest mosques were once Christian churches. Details on Christian iconography and architecture also signal a historical appreciation of the city's Christian past and present. Compared to 17th century, contact with Salonica's priests and nuns seems limited. Visitors now are accompanied mostly by either merchants or embassy personnel. Nevertheless, Paul Lucas tells the story of the capture of Ayia Sophia cathedral when the Ottomans conquered the city, where the blood of a monk who defended the church from aggressive Turks, had left a stain visible three centuries after[77].

Jewish presence in the city, while reading 18th century accounts, is not linked anymore to the expulsion from Spain. Travelers perceive the Jews as the majority of the city's population and focus more on their successes or shortcoming of their present rather than their misfortunes of their past. However, if we account the Donmeh as part of the Jewish majority, travelers, a century after Sabbatai's death, still recall the origins of this in-between religious group.

[76] Hekimoglou (2008) p. 61

[77] "The bloodied head fell along the length of the wall. It is said that when the Turks turned the church into a mosque, they did everything possible to erase the traces of blood", Paul Lucas 1705. Megas (2018) p.57

Conclusion

The 18th century was a pivotal time in the European perception of Salonica, shaped by the broader intellectual and cultural currents of the Enlightenment. As travel became more accessible and the European elite began to view the Mediterranean as a source of classical antiquity, Salonica emerged as a fascinating place—a living palimpsest where Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman history coexisted. Travelers driven by antiquarian zeal, colonial curiosity, or scholarly ambition framed the city through a lens that highlighted its ancient heritage while often marginalizing its multiethnic present. While their accounts are invaluable for reconstructing the city's material and social landscape, they are not neutral observations, but rather reflections of contemporary European preoccupations: the glorification of classical antiquity, the assertion of cultural superiority, and the commodification of the past. These predispositions create a parallel reality. One is grand, ideal and ever beautiful taking shape in ancient columns, worn out inscriptions and human like statues. The other is contemporary Salonica, a city that used to belong to the Byzantines, then Ottomans and Islam shaped its cityscape while Spanish and Italian speaking Jews filled the city with merchandise, textile factories and in some cases even fires.

The city's economic and demographic realities further complicated these narratives. While Salonica remained a significant textile producer within the Ottoman Empire, it struggled to compete with Western Europe's industrializing economies. The Jewish community, central to the city's commercial life for generations, found itself caught between Ottoman patronage and a system that stifled innovation. Meanwhile, the growing European presence, embodied by consuls, merchants, and antiquarians, signaled the encroachment of Western influence and foreshadowed the geopolitical shifts of the 19th century.

Ultimately, 18th century travel accounts reveal the tension between Salonica's idealized past and dynamic and multiethnic present. The city was simultaneously a museum of antiquity, a bustling Ottoman port, and a crucible of religious and cultural hybridity. Yet, as European travelers extracted its artifacts and inscribed their interpretations onto its streets, they also laid the groundwork for a colonial gaze that would later reshape the Mediterranean region.

4. Conclusion

When Mark Mazower wrote his monumental book on Salonica, treating the period from the Ottoman Conquest to the 1930s, he named Salonica "city of ghosts". This title highlights the many layers of a city that was shaped by every major cultural shift that occurred in the eastern Mediterranean region in the last five centuries. Byzantine, Ottoman, Sephardic and Greek influences molded the cityscape of Salonica. Modern Greeks walk past "ghosts" of the past every day. Either with neglect or proudness. Greek nationalism as expressed in the 19th century onward, expulsed countless aspects of early modern Salonica. Minarets were brought down, the Jewish quarter was reshaped completely, and Greeks were given more and more opportunities in business and housing with the emergence of the Greek national state. The ghosts however remained. A few synagogues in east Salonica, an Ottoman style fountain in the city center, Turkish and Ladino toponyms here and there, tell the story of a multicultural and diverse city. Travelers in the early modern period transmit this complex image through their accounts. By analyzing and comparing them, we can discover subtle or drastic changes in Salonica's early modern history.

From the 16th to the 18th century, Salonica emerged in travel literature as a city in flux. The city's identity was reshaped through economic shifts, evolving demographics, and the changing views of European observers.

In the 16th century, travelers encountered a rapidly expanding urban center, driven largely by a revitalized textile economy under Jewish leadership. The fragile urban environment was assembled poorly and was frequently disrupted by fire and poor sanitation, which underscored both growth and fragility. Historians argue that the 16th century was the Golden Age of Salonica, due to rapid economic development caused by the arrival of the Sephardim and Ottoman patronage. While this is true compared to the state of Salonica in the last centuries of Byzantine rule, many accounts treat a city that struggles to keep up with fires and sanitation. Observers noted the city's fortified walls, and its pluralistic social make up, though their accounts often marginalized Greek agency, fixating instead on Byzantine remnants as a memory of a lost Christian order. Megas and Hekimoglou both speak on the economic revival of the city thanks to Jewish repopulation. Mazower and a large consensus of historians address to the economic boom, stressing the advancements in technology and trade. However, based on perceptions of the city's

visitors, this “economic boom” is not clear, or at least, it is not mentioned explicitly. Travelers leave the impression of a city that tries to stand on its feet. Packed and dirty residential areas that are prone to fires is arguably the main portrayal of 16th century Salonica.

By the 17th century, the Jewish community had established itself both as an economic pillar and a focal point in European descriptions. Europeans begin to see Salonica more explicitly through Orientalist lens. Travel narratives increasingly traded in stereotypes, conflating commercial vibrancy with antisemitic tropes and casting Salonica as a symbol of exotic otherness. Rags, turbans and “eastern” mannerisms form European perceptions of the Orient. While difference in appearances between east and west were noteworthy, subtle implications of western superiority begin to emerge. Greek visibility modestly increased, primarily through references to Orthodox religious life. Nuns in particular become an occurring reference point for travelers. The rise of the Sabbatian movement added complexity to the city’s internal religious dynamics, as it created a liminal fourth group to the city’s traditional tripart. Visitors also had a hard time reporting accurate figures on the city’s population, number of religious buildings and even stationed troops. 17th century travelogues brought forth the logistical inefficiencies of a declining Ottoman Empire. Travelers, for a brief century, seem to acknowledge more the Venetian past of the city, up until the Ottoman took control. Peculiar exceptions to this are the two Ottoman sources that share a fabricated history of the city, mixing fact with fiction.

In the 18th century, Enlightenment ideals reframed Salonica as a site of classical antiquity, with travelers prioritizing its Greco-Roman past over its Ottoman and Jewish present. This antiquarian gaze often obscured the city’s living multicultural reality, projecting European fantasies of a lost grandeur onto its monuments while downplaying its contemporary dynamism. In some cases, this projection served the purpose of displaying Salonica as an open market of classical antiquities. In this reframing, Salonica’s Ottoman and Jewish realities were frequently sidelined. This is evident by the lack of Jewish and Ottoman mentions. The city's busy marketplaces, synagogues, and Islamic institutions appeared less often on travelogues of the 18th century. Despite these shifting perspectives, one constant remained: Salonica’s identity as a layered, contested space, where Byzantine heritage in the form of churches, Ottoman administration embodied in wool dressed Janissaries and Jewish presence expressed in descriptions of the modernized textile industry,

intersected. By the century's end, travel writing not only documented the city but also preannounced the colonial and nationalist ideologies that would later redefine Europe.

In conclusion, this research confirms the multicultural and diverse make up of Salonica, expressed in the co-existence of Ottoman, Jewish, Greek and other minorities throughout the early modern period. Travelers, via their impressions, attest to the plurality of the city loud and clear. However, a nuance that this thesis tried to highlight, is the shift of traveler perception on the dominant religious/ethnic group of the city. In the 16th century, the Ottomans were mentioned only in relation to their conquest. Research showed that there was no apparent Ottoman agency in the city's trade, which was dominated by the Sephardim, and Ottoman occupancy was limited to their military and administrative presence.

In the 17th century, when Salonica opened up to Europe, Jewish presence in the city was favored in travel accounts, as merchants and ambassadors were coming in contact almost exclusively with Jews. Travelers felt the need to tell their readers the reason why Salonica's Jewish population was so large, and they often mixed fact with fiction to achieve that. The Sabbatian movement was a common theme in the 17th century and reference to the Jews became more complex and reoccurring. French Missionaries and courtiers were coming to the city thanks to the French Embassy. In fact, these accounts, along with the anonymous German ones are the only mentions of the Greek Orthodox population of Salonica. Christian women, namely the nuns in the monastery of Agia Theodora, appear often in mentions of Christian churches. Turks are manifested in references of the Janissary corps, usually in a negative way, that become more and more of nuisance to local population. The start of the decline of the Ottoman empire is implicit in travelogues as numbers and percentages of the population do not portray reality. Each group hid members to avoid taxes and travel accounts unknowingly or not spread this misinformation.

Classicism in the 18th century shaped immensely foreign perceptions of Salonica. Greeks come to the surface and travelers become obsessed with Salonica's history, but this time their scope is defined by antiquarian interest. This interest, besides revitalizing historical curiosity on Greece and the Mediterranean, also ushered an era of smuggling antiquities to Western Europe from south and east. Implicitly, travelers portrayed Salonica as an open market for antiquities where ancient material culture was neglected by Ottoman rule and local populations. In this context, Jews were limited to references to the textile industry. More and more Europeans report a form of intellectual

theft from Jewish merchants, as authors claim that they copied French and English styles of fabrics, resulting in reduced sales in the region. The Donmeh, Muslim Jews, continued to perplex travelers, who tried to define their ways of worship and living. After almost three centuries after the conquest of Salonica by Selim I, Ottoman presence in 18th century travelogues is heteronomous, as travelers point out often that the city's grandest mosques used to be churches.

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