

THE SPREAD OF *ÇİFTLİK* (LARGE ESTATES) IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN BALKANS: THE CASE OF THE DISTRICT OF VEROIA¹

Antonis ANASTASOPOULOS²

Stefanos POULIOS

Yannis SPYROPOULOS

Abstract. *The aim of our paper is to discuss the spread of çiftliks, large estates, in the rural areas of the district of Veroia (Ott. Karaferye) in the course of the eighteenth century. To do so, we use a particular type of archival source, the registers of apportionment (tevzi defterleri) of taxes and other expenses among the local population, which allows us, thanks to its serial nature, to observe the evolution of landholding patterns, be it full ownership of the land or control over villages via other means, such as fiscal representation or villagers' indebtedness. We argue that the eighteenth century was a crucial period for the concentration of control of the villages in the hands of a predominantly Muslim, male, local or regional elite; we discuss methodological issues related to the interpretation of the tevzi defterleri; and we suggest that developments in Veroia must be studied in the context of statewide phenomena in the Ottoman Empire, such as the political and economic empowerment of provincial elites.*

Keywords: Ottoman Empire – Ottoman Balkans – Veroia (Karaferye) – çiftliks – eighteenth century – landholding – tevzi defters.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *çiftliks*, large market-oriented estates, were one of the forms of landholding that existed in several provinces of the Ottoman Empire as well as in the Balkan countries that had formerly been Ottoman territories³. The *çiftliks* were a phenomenon of uneven geographic distribution, but

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² Affiliations: Anastasopoulos: University of Crete & Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FO.R.T.H.; Poulios: University of Crete; Spyropoulos: Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FO.R.T.H.

³ Donald Quataert, „The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914”, in Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert (eds), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994,

one that had an important impact not only on the economy but also on the social and political spheres in several rural districts but sometimes also at the national level.

The spread of *çiftliks* largely took place in the eighteenth century. Our paper focuses on this formative period of the *çiftliks*, and our aim is to provide a case study of how the number of *çiftliks* increased enormously in the course of that century in one specific judicial-administrative district (*kaza*), that of Veroia (Ott. Karaferye), which lay to the west-southwest of Thessaloniki (Ott. Selânik), and combined a mountainous western and southern part with an extensive plain and access to the sea on its eastern side. To do that, we are going to use information from a particular type of Ottoman archival source, namely the registers of apportionment (*tevzi defterleri*, hereafter *tevzi defters*) of taxes and other collective expenses that the local population had to pay. These registers, also known as *masarif-i vilâyet defterleri*, registers of local expenses, were typically composed of an introductory text, a list of the taxes and other expenses to be paid, and a list of the settlements and groups among which the sums of money due were to be distributed, together with the share of each settlement and group. These registers were compiled regularly once or twice a year, or extraordinarily whenever it was deemed necessary⁴.

The *tevzi defters* were compiled, as noted above, for fiscal purposes. They were not inventories of *çiftliks* nor did they explain how *çiftliks* were formed. By listing, however, the rural settlements that were obliged to contribute to the tax burden and the names of those who controlled the land in each village, as well as thanks to their serial nature, they allow us to observe trends and changes in landownership, including the spread of *çiftliks*.

Modern scholarship uses the word *çiftlik* to describe large estates that were commercially run, but, as Halil İnalçık and others have pointed out, the original meaning of the word was „a plot of land of sufficient size to sustain one peasant household and pay the ‘rent’ to the landholder (the state) [...] This was the basic agricultural unit [in the Ottoman Empire]”⁵, *çift* actually meaning ‘a pair [of oxen]’

pp. 861-875; Socrates D. Petmezas, *Προλεγόμενα στην ιστορία της ελληνικής αγροτικής οικονομίας του Μεσοπολέμου*, Alexandria, Athens, 2012, pp. 76-113, 149-154, 165-182. Cf. Halil İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms, *Çiftliks*: State, Landlords, and Tenants”, in Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (eds), *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991, pp. 24-25.

⁴ For the *tevzi defters*, see Halil İnalçık, „Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700”, in *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 6, 1980, pp. 335-337; Yavuz Cezar, „18 ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Taşrasında Oluşan Yeni Malî Sektörün Mahiyet ve Büyüklüğü Üzerine”, in *Toplum ve Ekonomi*, 9, 1996, pp. 89-143. For the use of *tevzi defters* for the study of *çiftliks*, see Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600-1800*, Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, Cambridge and Paris, 1981, pp. 157-170.

⁵ İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, p. 18. For the various meanings of the word *çiftlik*, see also Sophia Laiou, „Some Considerations Regarding *Çiftlik* Formation in the Western Thessaly, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries”, in Elias Kolovos, Phokion Kotzageorgis, Sophia Laiou, Marinos Sariyannis

and hence the land that a farmer could plough with these animals. *Çiftlik* means 'farm' in modern Turkish, and it was used in this sense in the Ottoman period as well⁶. At the same time, it was used to denote landholdings that were not cultivated by the person who owned or possessed the land, but by peasants who were bound to him (or, less often, her) by contract or other means. This is evident when the *tevzi defters* list in different sections, under the headings 'kura' (villages) and 'çiftlikân' (*çiftliks*), the villages whose land was held and cultivated by the villagers and those whose land was controlled by people who did not work it themselves⁷, or when the landholding Muslim elite of Veroia was described in a legal document as "notables and *çiftlik*-owners" (*ayan ve ashab-ı çiftlikân*)⁸.

Large landownership was formed in the Ottoman Empire through both legal and illegal means. One way was the reclamation of waste or abandoned land either by sultan fiat or not⁹. Another was the licit or illicit transfer of landownership or usufruct rights from the villagers, often as a result of insolvency on their part, to third parties. This option included the illegal registration of land as private (and then *vakıf*¹⁰, which rendered it inalienable) with the connivance of the local court of law¹¹. The possession of, especially lifelong (*malikâne*), tax-collection rights over a region in the context of the Ottoman tax-farming system (*iltizam*) facilitated the appropriation of rural land previously held by villagers¹².

(eds), *The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Greek Lands: Toward a Social and Economic History. Studies in Honor of John C. Alexander*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2007, pp. 257-258.

⁶ Cf. Demetrios Papastamatiou, „The Structure, Content and Development of Large Estates in the Environs of Salonica during the Period 1697-1770”, in Evangelia Balta, Georgios Salakidis and Theoharis Stavrides (eds), *Festschrift in Honor of Ioannis P. Theocharides. II. Studies on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2014, p. 380.

⁷ Antonis Anastasopoulos and Eleni Gara, „The Rural Hinterland of Karaferye: Settlements, Divisions, and the *Çiftlik* Phenomenon (Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries)”, in Elias Kolovos (ed.), *Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies: Halcyon Days in Crete VIII. A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 13-15 January 2012*, Crete University Press, Rethymno, 2015, pp. 265-266, 276-277. Sometimes the non-*çiftlik* tax shares were designated as those of the common (non-Muslim) taxpayers (*reaya*) rather than as those of the villages (*kura*). For the use of *çiftlik* to indicate large estates, cf. İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, p. 29; Gilles Veinstein, „On the *Çiftlik* Debate”, in Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (eds), *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991, p. 41; Papastamatiou, „Large Estates in the Environs of Salonica”, pp. 384-386.

⁸ Greek General State Archives, Imathia Branch, Veroia, Greece, *Karaferye Kadı Sicilleri* (hereafter KKS-GR), vol. 81, p. 229, entry no. 2 (12 Rebiyülahir 1173 / 3 December 1759).

⁹ İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, pp. 19-22, 24-26; Veinstein, „On the *Çiftlik* Debate”, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰ *Vakıfs* were endowments created in the name of a pious cause.

¹¹ İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, p. 22; Veinstein, „On the *Çiftlik* Debate”, pp. 39-42; İrfan Kokdas, „Money, Peasant Mobility, *Çiftliks*, and Local Politics in Salonika: 1740-1820”, in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 34, 2014, p. 137.

¹² İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, pp. 22-23; Laiou, „Some Considerations”, p. 275; but see also Veinstein, „On the *Çiftlik* Debate”, pp. 45-47. On ways and methods of *çiftlik* formation see also McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe*, pp. 58-79, 136-141.

There is scarce information about the terms of exploitation of *çiftlik* land, but it seems that sharecropping was a popular arrangement that regulated the relationship between landholder and farmhand,¹³ with wage labour as an alternative, especially in more market-oriented estates¹⁴. It also seems that large expanses of *çiftlik* land were not cultivated but used instead as pastures¹⁵. Older scholarship associated the emergence of the *çiftliks* with the rise of capitalism and the needs of the international markets, but this view has been revised¹⁶. It seems that large landholders did not necessarily intensify production or act as capitalist-minded businessmen, even though *çiftliks* might have been market-oriented¹⁷.

In many, if not in most, cases, *çiftlik* owners must have been urban dwellers who managed their estates from a distance through agents (*subaşı*) who lived on the spot. In this respect, the *çiftlik* phenomenon may be treated in spatial terms as the domination of the urban centres over the countryside, and in socio-economic ones as the domination of the urban elites over the peasantry¹⁸. Because of the Islamic ideology of the Ottoman state that resulted in discrimination against non-Muslims, those in power and in a privileged position were Muslims; landholding elites also were predominantly Muslim in terms of their religious identity¹⁹.

Çiftliks in the tevzi defters of Veroia

According to the *tevzi defters* that we have studied, the last years of the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth century were a crucial period for the establishment of large estates in the district of Veroia. Although the roots of the formation of such estates may be traced to the early seventeenth century²⁰, and possibly earlier, this period witnessed an acceleration in *çiftlik*

¹³ For a sharecropping contract, see KKS-GR 92/1/3 (9 Cemaziyelevvel 1185 / 20 August 1771). On sharecropping, see İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, pp. 20-21; Veinstein, „On the *Çiftlik* Debate”, p. 49.

¹⁴ İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, pp. 27-28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28; cf. Laiou, „Some Considerations”, p. 267.

¹⁶ Veinstein, „On the *Çiftlik* Debate”, pp. 36, 44, 46-47, 50-51; Laiou, „Some Considerations”, pp. 275-276; Papastamatiou, „Large Estates in the Environs of Salonica”, pp. 376-377. Cf. İnalçık, „The Emergence of Big Farms”, pp. 23-26.

¹⁷ Papastamatiou, „Large Estates in the Environs of Salonica”, and *Wealth Distribution, Social Stratification and Material Culture in an Ottoman Metropolis: Thessaloniki According to the Probate Inventories of the Muslim Court (1761-1770)*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2017, pp. 225-231 and *passim*, has aptly shown the usefulness of Ottoman probate inventories (*tereke defterleri*) for the study of eighteenth-century *çiftliks*.

¹⁸ Eleni Gara, „Moneylenders and Landowners: In Search of Urban Muslim Elites in the Early Modern Balkans”, in Antonis Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete V: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 10-12 January 2003*, Crete University Press, Rethymno, 2005, pp. 144-146.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Anastasopoulos and Gara, „The Rural Hinterland of Karaferye”, p. 275.

²⁰ Gara, „Moneylenders and Landowners”, pp. 144-146; Anastasopoulos and Gara, „The Rural Hinterland of Karaferye”, pp. 275-276.

formation, while the definite establishment of *çiftlik*s as a dominant feature of the rural (and fiscal, from the point of view of our sources) make-up of the district must have occurred in the middle years of the eighteenth century²¹. For instance, while a *tevzi defter* of 1683 lists only one *çiftlik* property, in the village of Palati[ni]ça, in the entire district of Veroia, among 94 villages in total, in 1698 the number of villages with *çiftlik* lands had risen to seven among 81. A little less than 30 years later, in 1727, not fewer than 39 villages out of a total of 79, i.e. one in two, had been transformed into *çiftlik*s. By 1770, the vast majority of the villages of the district, 84 out of a total of 103, were recorded as *çiftlik*s. By the end of the eighteenth century, the percentage of villages that were not marked as the *çiftlik*s of specific landholders was well below 20 per cent, a total of no more than a dozen villages (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Villages in six *tevzi defters* of Veroia of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries

	1683 ²²	1698 ²³	1727 ²⁴	1770 ²⁵	1786 ²⁶	1795 ²⁷
Villages (total)	94	81	79	103	60	35
Non-chiftlicised villages	93	74	40	19	11	6
Çiftlik villages	1	7	39	84	49	29
Çiftlik-village percentage	1.06%	8.64%	49.3%	81.6%	81.67%	82.9%

The figures in Table 1 reflect a clear tendency, namely the increasing absorption of small holdings into large landownership. The evolution of this process is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 which have been created on the basis of data from *tevzi defters* of 1698 (Fig. 1) and 1770 (Fig. 2). At the end of the seventeenth century, the rather few *çiftlik*s (marked in red in the maps) were situated in the lowland east and north of the town of Veroia, the administrative centre of the district. By 1770, the *çiftlik*s dominated the region with the exception of its mountainous western section where there were very few non-chiftlicised villages (marked in light blue in the maps).

²¹ Cf. Vassilis Demetriades, „Problems of Land-owning and Population in the Area of Gazi Evrenos Bey’s Wakf”, in *Balkan Studies*, 22, 1981, pp. 43-57, esp. pp. 44-45; Kokdas, „Money, Peasant Mobility, Çiftlik”, p. 140.

²² T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı – Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey, *Karaferye Kadı Sicilleri* (hereafter KKS-TR) 563/3-4, 20 Rebiyülahir 1094 / 18 April 1683.

²³ KKS-GR 40/66-67, 11-20 Rebiyülevvel 1110 / 17-26 September 1698.

²⁴ KKS-GR 62/1279-1280, 15 Rebiyülevvel 1140 / 31 October 1727.

²⁵ KKS-GR 91/860-863, 15 Receb 1184 / 4 November 1770.

²⁶ KKS-GR 99/35, 6 Şevval 1200 / 2 August 1786.

²⁷ KKS-GR 101/9-12, 25 Zilhicce 1209 / 13 July 1795. See below for explanation as to the low overall number of villages in this register and the register of 1786.

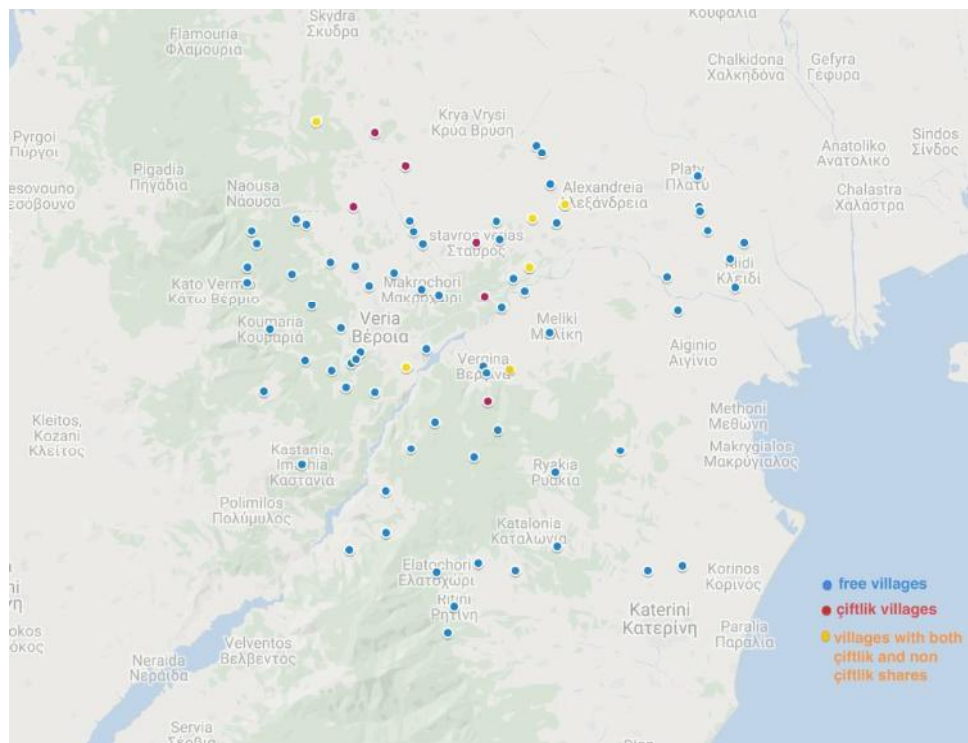


Figure 1. Çiftlik and non-çiftlik villages of the district of Veroia according to KKS-GR 40/52 and KKS-GR 40/66-67 (1698)²⁸.

²⁸ Maps are based on Google Maps.

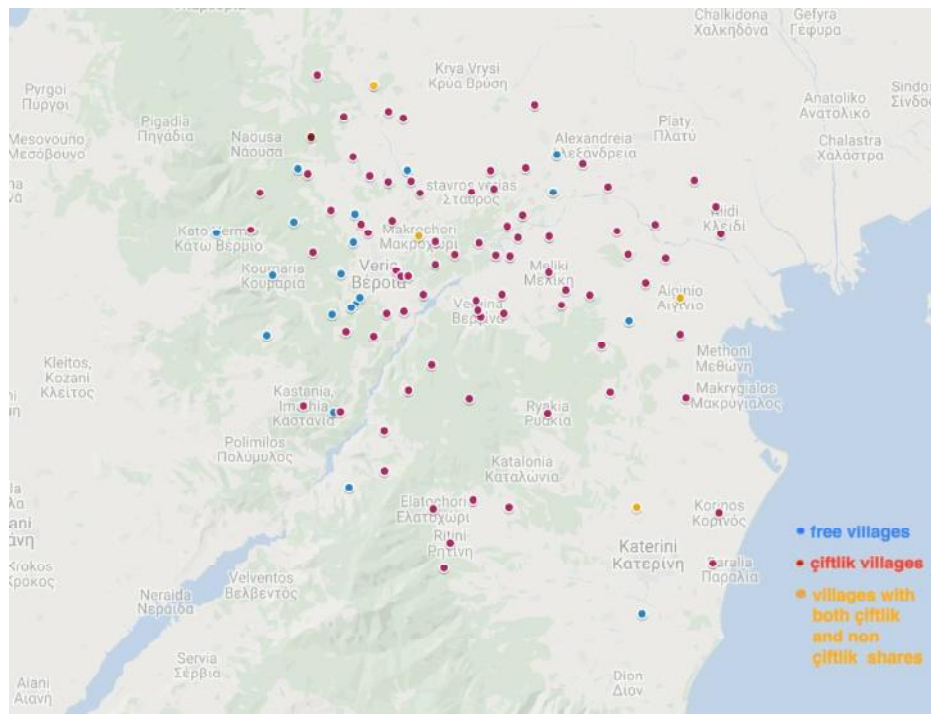


Figure 2. Çiftlik and non-çiftlik villages of the district of Veroia according to KKS-GR 91/860-863 (1770).

No matter how perspicuous and unambiguous the data above may seem, their analysis does not come without methodological pitfalls or black holes. For instance, it is not always clear why registers of the same year may not list the exact same villages. Such occurrences, or the disappearance or reappearance of villages in the registers of two consecutive years or in registers that are only a few years apart, must in most cases be explained as the result of changing administrative or accounting practices and not as the expression of changes in demography or settlement patterns²⁹. This is obvious from the fact that villages that are not to be found in one register are often recorded in another register of the same year. Furthermore, the study of the registers in the long term shows that the vast majority of villages are listed in most of them. Disappearances or reappearances generally concern a very small number of villages, and most of them seem to have been villages that were small in size. Thus, apart from general trends, we are able to also follow the evolution of landownership and taxation individually in most villages of the region. In any case, the problem remains that, since the principles of compiling the registers are not set forth in the sources, we

²⁹ One possible explanation, for instance, could be a change in the legal status of a village, such as its registration as *vakıf* land; Machiel Kiel, „Remarks on the Administration of the Poll Tax (*Cizye*) in the Ottoman Balkans and Value of Poll Tax Registers (*Cizye Defterleri*) for Demographic Research”, in *Études Balkaniques*, 4, 1990, pp. 89-92.

cannot know with certainty. Moreover, we should not forget that the *tevzi defters* were not compiled either as village inventories or cadastral surveys, but as fiscal registers. As a result, they do not specify the legal status of the land that is recorded as the *çiftlik* of so-and-so nor the exact meaning of the *alâka* category that we discuss below.

When comparisons are made, it should also be taken into account that separate *tevzi defters* were compiled for different taxes and expenses. Therefore, in this section of our paper, for purposes of consistency, we have used *masarif-i vilâyet* registers, that is, registers that concern various communal expenses. In the next section, we combine these registers with registers of other types, such as those that concern the collection of the taxes *bedel-i nüzül* and *avarız*, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of landownership patterns.

One interesting phenomenon that pertains to the methodology of compiling the *tevzi defters* is that the number of villages listed decreases progressively in the late eighteenth century. In that period, instead of recording individual villages, the scribes listed the names of landholders allocating to each of them a tax share that corresponded to the total of their estates in the various villages under their control (or, possibly, villages that they controlled in other capacities or ways, such as their fiscal representatives or through the extension of loans)³⁰. We can trace this change in listing practices in the registers as early as 1750; by the end of the eighteenth century no more than forty villages were listed by name. For instance, the *tevzi defter* of 1786 cited above, rather than listing individually the *çiftliks* of the powerful notable Halil Ağa, tax-farmer and de facto governor of the neighbouring district of Katerini (Ott. Katerin), in various villages in the south-eastern section of the district of Veroia, records the overall tax share that corresponded to the villages under his control as *alâka-ı* (related to) *Halil Ağa* at the end of the *tevzi defter*. As a consequence of this practice, certain villages disappear from the registers and little by little the shares of each large landholder take more space in them replacing the detailed listing of villages. In 1770 there was only one notable, Rüşdi Efendi, an important figure in the public life of Veroia, whose tax share was recorded separately under his name at the end of the *tevzi defter*, whereas in 1786 the *alâka-ı so-and-so* entries were nine and in 1795 sixteen. This change in recording practices undoubtedly served practical purposes but, in all probability, it also reflected the control of whole villages by one or two members of the local or regional elite and the formation of more coherent landholding units under fewer owners.

Further interpretative issues arise when we examine the data of the *tevzi defters* not in terms of village numbers, but of tax shares apportioned among villages. As Table 2 shows, when we do so, the picture that emerges is quite different.

³⁰ Cf. Kokdas, „Money, Peasant Mobility, *Çiftliks*”, p. 144.

TABLE 2. Village tax shares in six *tevzi defters* of Veroia of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries (in brackets, the type of tax unit used in each register)

	1683 (hane)	1698 (hane)	1727 (hane)	1770 (çift)	1786 (res)	1795 (res)
Total number of tax shares	814	211	195.875	820.75	343	314.5
Non-chiftlicised villages	813	201.75	164.75	312	91	30
Çiftlik villages	1	9.25	31.125	508.75	252	284.5
Çiftlik- share percentage	0.12%	4.38%	15.89%	61.99%	73.47%	90.46%

Even though these data corroborate the tendency of large landownership to expand, it seems that the tax share of *çiftlik*s in the late seventeenth and the first decades of the eighteenth century was proportionally much smaller than the percentage of chiftlicised villages in the district. For instance, *çiftlik*s represented 15.89 per cent of the total number of tax shares vs. 49.3 per cent of the total number of villages, according to the *tevzi defter* of 1727. In other words, it seems that, during this early phase of *çiftlik* proliferation, large landownership grew by subsuming settlements with smaller populations and less arable land, a phenomenon which underlines the gradually increasing dynamic of the process, unless other interpretations apply: for instance, it might be that *çiftlik* owners were able to negotiate better fiscal terms for their villagers as an incentive towards bringing more villages under their control.³¹ In any case, this tendency remained the same, even though more attenuated, until the end of the eighteenth century (61.99 vs. 81.6 per cent in 1770, 73.47 vs. 81.67 per cent in 1786, 90.46 vs. 94 per cent or more of the total number of villages in 1795)³². Of course, it must be noted that the units used in the *tevzi defters* to represent tax shares change over time, an issue that we discuss below, therefore further research is required before we can draw a comprehensive conclusion.

The unit that was used to count tax shares in the *tevzi defters* of the late seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century was the household (*hane*)³³. This household did not coincide with a real one. It was rather a fiscal, accounting, unit that did not even correspond to a fixed number of real households; the number of real households that were included in a fiscal one varied depending on their wealth. When

³¹ Cf. Ioannis K. Vasdravellis (ed.), *Ιστορικά Αρχεία Μακεδονίας. Β'. Αρχείον Βεροίας-Ναούσης, 1598-1886*, Society for Macedonian Studies, Thessaloniki, 1954, pp. 98-99, no. 123; McGowan, *Economic Life*, pp. 140-141; Demetriades, „Problems of Land-owning”, p. 54; Kokdas, „Money, Peasant Mobility, Çiftlik”, pp. 140-141.

³² As explained above, we do not know the exact total number of villages in 1795, so here we use a fictional number of 100 villages, which is a safe and moderate estimate.

³³ For a discussion of the term *hane*, see McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe*, pp. 158-160.

we examine the registers of the late seventeenth century with a focus on fiscal households, a phenomenon that attracts our attention is that the 814 households registered in 1683 were reduced to 211, or by 74 per cent, in 1698, a number which remains relatively stable in the decades that followed. This decrease is too large to interpret as the product of depopulation of the area, especially at a time when no major military or natural phenomena are known to have triggered such a decline. Therefore, this, too, must most likely be attributed to changes in the accounting method.

In addition, we know that the number of fiscal households of the 1683 register referred to non-Muslims only, since the households mentioned therein are explicitly described as poll-tax households (*cizye haneleri*), the poll-tax (*cizye*) being a tax collected exclusively from non-Muslims. In other words, this phenomenon can be described as a radical decrease of the registering of Christian households within villages with a steady presence in the registers³⁴. But, what could have caused this sizable difference in the two registrations? Perhaps an answer to this question is to be found in the Ottoman tax system.

In 1691 the central Ottoman administration reformed the poll-tax collection system, which also formed the basis for the calculation of taxes and other expenses entered in the *tevzi defters*³⁵. It seems that this reform led to an extensive recalculation of taxpaying units which, in turn, caused the replacement of the old lists used up to that point by the central administration. According to the reform, the old poll-tax household was to be replaced as a tax unit by a division of non-Muslim taxpayers into poor, middle class, and rich ones on an individual (rather than household) basis. As recorded in various areas of the Ottoman Empire, this change resulted in a – yet to be adequately explained – decrease in the numbers of tax-paying units³⁶. Thus, it may be that the dramatic drop in numbers that we see in the case of Veroia reflects an Empire-wide change. After all, as Nenad Moačanin has convincingly shown, fiscal households should be treated as a sort of flexible gauge, the size of which could be negotiated between local communities and tax collectors³⁷. In other words, it would be a plausible assumption to say that, on the heels of a major administrative reform and the negotiations that came with it, the decrease in the number of fiscal households expressed the lumping together of payments of various households into larger household units (approximately 3.5 times bigger). In principle, such a reduction of fiscal households would reflect an inversely proportional increase in the sums paid by each such household. However, there is no way of actually juxtaposing the sums paid, since the registers that we deal with neither list equable and comparable expenses nor were they kept with a regular periodicity.

³⁴ For example, the households of the village of Mikroğuz drop from 25 to 8, those of Kumaniç from 17 to 7.5, those of İskiliç from 15 to 3.5, those of İksirolivad from 40 to 15 etc.

³⁵ A poll-tax register of 1681 demonstrates this correlation most clearly; KKS-TR 563, fol. 2v.

³⁶ Marinos Sariyannis, „Notes on the Ottoman Poll-Tax Reforms of the Late Seventeenth Century: The Case of Crete”, in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 54, 2011, p. 45.

³⁷ Nenad Moačanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube, 1526-1690*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2006, pp. 207ff.

The fiscal household (*hane*) was replaced by other tax units in the *tevzi defters* of the second half of the eighteenth century. However, the problem remains for modern scholarship to specify the number of real households that corresponded to each unit or the amount of money to be paid by each real household. As the tax units were just a means to apportion taxes and other expenses and most likely lost, with time, their original association with real households, *hane* was changed into *çift* as the tax unit used in the *tevzi defters* of the second half of the eighteenth century, possibly because this latter word was much more relevant to the concept of taxing landed properties. Still, there is variety which prevents us from strong statements or definite conclusions about tax units and if they should be read literally or if they all signified 'tax share': for instance, in a *tevzi defter* of 1748 the tax shares for *çiftlik* owners and their waged labourers (*aylakçı reaya*) were counted as *res* (head)³⁸, while the shares of non-*çiftlik* villages were calculated by *hanes*³⁹. Furthermore, a *tevzi defter* of 1759 describes the tax shares as „rüüs çift”⁴⁰. In any case, the total number of tax shares fluctuated in the course of time, even when we compare *tevzi defters* of one category (i.e., for the same tax or for communal expenses) that use the same tax unit. For instance, from 1710 to 1731 the recorded *hanes* varied between 55 and 255. Likewise, when *çifts* or *res/rüüs* replaced *hanes*, there still was significant divergence in the number of shares from one year to another: for instance, 1,632-1,642 tax shares in 1759, between 900 and 970 in 1765-1768, 840.5 in 1770, 806 in 1771, 700 in 1774, 1,760-1,810 in 1776-1777, 600 in 1782, 400 in 1785, 343 in 1786⁴¹. It is still a preliminary observation that requires further investigation, but it seems that, despite the anomaly observed in 1776-1777, the total number of tax units tends to decrease in the duration of the second half of the eighteenth century, which may be associated with the expansion of large estates and the predominance of a landholding elite over the region.

If we treat *hanes*, *çifts* and *res* as accounting rather than real units, and moreover as units that did not correspond to fixed numbers of real households or fixed amounts of land, we become sceptical about their usefulness in counting the size of *çiftlik*s other than in relative terms, i.e. when comparing within the same village or across the same *tevzi defter*. In such cases, we may assume that the data are reliable as to the relative size of the property of each *çiftlik* holder. To cite a few examples of such comparisons, in a *tevzi defter* of 1727 (Table 3) there is a *çiftlik* holder, Serdar Ağa, with 5.875 *hanes* and another, Şahin, with only 0.25 *hanes*, both in the village of Palatiça (mod. Palatitsia); Sarıcazade had three *çifts* in the village of Monoşpita (mod. Monospita) in 1770, while Seyyid İbrahim owned only half a *çift* in the same village; in Palatiça again, Sarıcazade's son, Seyyid Ali Ağa, had more *çifts* than all the

³⁸ İrfan Kokdaş describes *res* (pl. *rüüs*) as „the fuzzy *rüüs* (fiscal units) category”; Kokdas, „Money, Peasant Mobility, *Çiftlik*s”, p. 143.

³⁹ KKS-GR 72/127, 11-20 Receb 1161 / 7-16 July 1748.

⁴⁰ KKS-GR 81/375/1, 27 Ramazan 1172 / 24 May 1759.

⁴¹ Cf. Antonis Anastasopoulos, „Imperial Institutions and Local Communities: Ottoman Karaferye, 1758-1774”, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 30-31.

other landholders of the village together. Such considerable differences are useful in suggesting that the word *çiftlik* did not describe estates of a certain size, but rather the existence of a relationship of dependency between the owner or holder of the land and those who lived in it and/or provided labour.

Finally, by juxtaposing the *tevzi defters* of successive years we may observe the expansion or disappearance of the estates of specific individuals, but, unless we can combine this information with information from other archival sources, it is often difficult to interpret them. For instance, in 1770, a certain Zaim Mustafa Ağa had tax shares registered in his name, and thus, as we assume, land that he owned or controlled, in six different villages⁴². In the following year, though, only less than one *çift* in the village of Kum (mod. Ammos) was registered in his name. How can we explain this sudden decrease? By taking into account if there was a change in the total number of tax shares in these villages and/or if new names were registered in the later *tevzi defter*, it is possible to hypothesise – but only that – as to whether his land had been sold or transferred to newcomers or absorbed in the estates of other local landholders or bequeathed (in the case of death). In another case of the same years, the *çiftlik* of a certain Memiş Ağa in the village of Loncanoz in 1770 was registered in his wife's name in the *tevzi defter* of 1771⁴³. However, the silence of the registers on details such as whether such changes were the result of sale, donation or bequest, leaves us speculating.

The *çiftlik* owners of Veroia and their identities

Since the *tevzi defters* cite the names of landholders per village, they afford us the opportunity – as has already been pointed out – to study the evolution of landholding over time at the micro level. To illustrate this, Table 3 juxtaposes the data for five villages of the district of Veroia on the basis of two registers compiled in 1698 and 1727. These villages are Monoşpita, Palatiça, Servihor (mod. Zervochoi), İstavroz (mod. Stavros) and Veştiça (mod. Aggelochori).

⁴² In the villages Aletra, Kopanovo (mod. Kopanos), Asomata, Veştiça-1 Atik, Veştiça-1 Cedit and Kum.

⁴³ KKS-GR 91/581-585, undated.

TABLE 3. *Çiftlik* holders and tax shares in five villages of the district of Veroia according to *tevzi defters* of 1698 and 1727

Village	1698 ⁴⁴		1727 ⁴⁵		
	<i>Çiftlik</i> holder	Fiscal households	<i>Çiftlik</i> holder	Fiscal households	
Monoşpita	Memiş Efendi	1.765	Memiş Efendi	1.165	
	Mehmed Ağa	1.85	Mehmed Ağa	1.85	
	el-Hac Osman	1.6	El-Hac Osman	1.6	
	Memiş Sipahi	1.06	Memiş Sipahi	1.06	
	Seyyid Ahmed	1.065	Seyyid Ahmed Efendi	1.065	
	Surmelizade	1.4	Surmelizade	1.4	
	Mehmed Çelebi el-kâtib	0.7	Mehmed Efendi	0.7	
	Allamezade Çelebi	0.98	Ali Çelebi	1.65	
	Hasan Hoca	0.53	Allamezade Çelebi	0.98	
	Mustafa Ağa	1.2	Arnavud Ahmed	0.93	
	Şehbaz	1.45	Mustafa Ağa	1.2	
el-Hac Mustafa	0.98	Şehbaz	1.45		
Total		14.58		15.05	
Çiftlik property		14.58 (100%)		15.05 (100%)	
Palatiça	Hatib Efendi	1.025	Hatib Efendi	1.025	
	Ali Beşe	1.26	Ali Beşe	1.26	
	Serdarzade	0.43	Serdarzade	0.43	
	Abdulvehab	1.02	Abdulvehab	1.02	
	Zulfıkar Ağa	1.425	Zulfıkar Kethüda	1.425	
	Hızır Ağa	2.05	Hızır Ağa	2.05	
	Ahmed Beşe	0.6	Ahmed Beşe	0.6	
	Bayramzade	1.525	Bayramzade	1.125	
	Non-Muslims (non-chiftlicised land)		16.9	Non-Muslims (non-chiftlicised land)	5.5
				Non-Muslims under Yusuf Efendi's agency	1
				Serdar Ağa	5.875
		Şahin		0.25	
		Ali Ağa İmamî		2.875	
	Ustulurmi	1			

⁴⁴ KKS-GR 40/52, 7 Şevval 1109 / 18 April 1698.

⁴⁵ KKS-GR 62/1268-1270, 8 Safer 1140 / 25 September 1727.

Total		26.235		25.435
Çiftlik property		9.335 (35.58%)		18.935 (74.44%)
Servihor	Mahmud Efendi	1	Mahmud Efendi	2.26
	Fatma Hatun	1.425	Fatma Hatun	1.425
	Zulfikar Ağa	1.425	Zulfikar Ağa	1.425
	Serdarzade	1.93	Serdarzade	1.4
	Rabia Hatun	0.565	Rabia Hatun	0.565
	Ramazan	0.5	another Rabia Hatun	1.06
Total		6.845		8.135
Çiftlik property		6.845 (100%)		8.135 (100%)
İstavroz	Mustafa Ağa	0.7	Mustafa Ağa	0.7
	Kalmeroğlu	2.05	Kalmerzade	2.05
	Kethüda Mustafa Ağa	1.6	Kethüda Mustafa Ağa	1.6
	Mehmed Ağa	1	Kasımbeğzade	1.425
	Mustafa Çelebi	1.15	Çavuşzade	1.6
	Kasımbeğzade	1.425	Mustafa Çelebi	1.15
	Çavuşzade	1.6	Mehmed Ağa	1.7
Total		9.525		10.225
Çiftlik property		9.525 (100%)		10.225 (100%)
Veştiça	İbrahim Ağa	1.965	İbrahim Ağa	1.965
	Fatma Hatun	0.7	Fatma Hatun	0.7
	Mustafa Çelebi	1.06	Mustafa Çelebi	1.06
	Hasanağazade	1.15	Hasanağazade	1.15
	Ali bin Hüseyin	0.7	Ali bin Hüseyin	0.7
	Hasan Abdullah	0.4	Hasan Abdullah	0.2
	Yusuf non-Muslim	0.4	Yusuf bin Mehmed	0.2
	Dimitri non-Muslim	0.4	Non-Muslims under Dimitri's agency	0.4
Total		6.775		6.375
Çiftlik property		6.775 (100%)		6.375 (100%)

This representative sample of villages makes it clear that the vast majority of *çiftlik* holders (92.68 per cent) remained in possession of their lands for a period of at least thirty years during the early period of large estate formation in the area: the *çiftlik*s (and their owners) were here to stay.

We should add that even if in many cases *çiftlik*s were bequeathed from father to sons or from husband to wife, new *çiftlik* holders also appear in the *tevzi defters*, while, in the case of not entirely chiftlicised villages, the expansion of old *çiftlik*s and the creation of new ones took place at the expense of small peasant holdings. This can be demonstrated most clearly in the case of the village of Palatiça where, between the compilation of the two registers of 1698 and 1727, independent farmers seem to have lost 67.45 per cent of their lands to large estate holders. This process appears to have led to the near extinction of small peasant landownership in the district of Veroia well before the turn of the nineteenth century. For instance, Palatiça appears to have been fully chiftlicised before the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ Mikroğuz (mod. Makrochori), on the other hand, is one of the few villages where the local non-Muslim population still controlled a share of land in 1770 (two out of 17.5 *çifts*). However, sixteen years later, in a register of 1786, there is no share of independent farmers.

The *tevzi defters* describe independent farmers as *reaya*, a term initially used collectively for the Ottoman Empire's tax-paying subjects, regardless of their religion. However, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the same word acquired an increasingly religious connotation signifying the Ottoman non-Muslims⁴⁷. As Table 3 shows, in the *tevzi defter* of 1698 only two *reaya* (4.87 per cent) were listed among the *çiftlik* holders of the five villages, both in Veştiça. What is noteworthy is that one of them, a certain Yusuf (Josef) *reaya*, gives his place in 1727 to a Muslim named Yusuf bin (son of) Mehmed. The identical names of the Christian and Muslim holders of the *çiftlik* make us consider the possibility that the two persons were, in fact, the same and that Yusuf had converted to Islam. However, in the Ottoman Empire the standard practice was to use „Abdullah” (slave of God) as father's name for converts⁴⁸, a fact that weakens this hypothesis, since Yusuf was registered in 1727 as „the son of Mehmed”. No matter if the Yusuf of 1727 had been a convert to Islam, one thing is for sure, the overwhelming majority of *çiftlik* owners in Veroia were Muslim according to the available data until the end of the eighteenth century. Apart from Hacı Manol who seems to keep for years (first recorded in 1727) and transfer to his sons the family lands in Kulura (mod. Kouloura), the presence of non-Muslims among landholders is very small: 5.88 per cent of the total in 1698, 9.77 in 1727, 5.06 in 1770, 1.69 in 1795. In 1770, we find only a certain Nikola in Rahova

⁴⁶ Vehbi Günay, „H. 1159 (M. 1746) Tarihli Karaferye Kazası Şer'iyeye Sicili (Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirme)”, Yüksek Lisans thesis, Ege Üniversitesi, İzmir, 1993, pp. 66-70, 152-160, 169-177.

⁴⁷ Mehmet Öz, „Reâyâ”, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, İstanbul, 2007, p. 490.

⁴⁸ Halil Sahillioğlu, „Slaves in the Social and Economic Life of Bursa in the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries”, in *Turcica*, 17, 1985, pp. 61-62.

(mod. Rachi), a Tanas in Kravata (mod. Krevvatas) and an İstavrozoğlu in Yavatoz (mod. Diavatos). Twenty-five years later, Hacı Manol's family is the only non-Muslim landholder in the *tevzi defter* of 1795.

The examples of the villages of Palatiça and Veștiça also bring to the fore the question of agency, its importance for tax collection and its role in the formation of *çiftlik*s. In the case of Palatiça in particular, out of the 6.5 households of independent farmers listed in the *tevzi defter* of 1727, one is noted as having been under the agency of a certain Yusuf Efendi (*reaya-yı Palatiça-ı Yusuf Efendi*). This involvement of a Muslim in the payment of the taxes of a part of the village's non-Muslim households is noteworthy because it makes us wonder about the degree of these non-Muslims' actual financial independence and about the methods used by the area's elite to expand their economic influence over the local population. More specifically, the fact that 15 years later the same Yusuf Efendi appears to be the owner of a large *çiftlik* in the same village⁴⁹, makes us think that it would not be unreasonable to assume that it was his previous role as the fiscal agent of small farmers that paved the way for this development.

Apparently as a reflection and product of the inferior legal and social status of both groups, women, exclusively Muslim, represented a minority of landholders, just as non-Muslims did. This finding agrees with that of Demetris Papastamatiou who has studied probate inventories (*tereke defterleri*) of Thessaloniki, the urban centre on which the district of Veroia was administratively dependent. According to Papastamatiou, „women's contribution to agrarian economy of the area is limited. Although five of them were included among the fifteen *çiftlik* owners with more than one big farms, only nine women in total, that is 14% of all large estate owners, had at least one *çiftlik*. The total value of all these farms was low and played a minor role even within the women's estate composition”⁵⁰. Papastamatiou's research refers to the 1760s, and indeed the representation of Muslim women among *çiftlik* owners in the district of Veroia, too, was extremely low in the second half of the eighteenth century: only two (Ümm-i Külsum and the puzzling *kadıncık*) with tax shares in three villages in 1770, and only one (*alâka-ı Mücibe Hanım*) in 1795, or 2.53 and 1.69 per cent of the total number of *çiftlik* holders, respectively. The situation was somewhat better in the late seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, but still Muslim women represented a fraction of the total number of *çiftlik* holders: 5.88 per cent in 1698 and 9.77 per cent in 1727.

Even though the *tevzi defters* do not provide any personal information on the landholders other than their names, we may reasonably assume that most of them were local or localised individuals and families, or, if not, the members of notable families from neighbouring districts, as the testimony of other archival sources

⁴⁹ KKS-GR 70/63, 3 Muharrem 1155 / 10 March 1742.

⁵⁰ Papastamatiou, *Wealth Distribution*, pp. 335-336. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 225-231; Phokion Kotzageorgis and Demetrios Papastamatiou, „Wealth Accumulation in an Urban Context: The Profile of the Muslim Rich of Thessaloniki in the Eighteenth Century on the Basis of Probate Inventories”, in *Turkish Historical Review*, 5, 2014, p. 185 and *passim*.

actually confirms in a number of cases⁵¹. The eighteenth century marks a period when Ottoman central elites progressively gave way to provincial power-brokers all around the Empire, and Veroia seems to have conformed to this pattern. Often such rising local elites started their careers as agents of members of the central elite only to eventually evolve into independent magnates in their native lands by obtaining tax-farming contracts and acquiring large estates. Their local origins gave them the capacity to closely oversee their investments and to develop strategies for their further expansion⁵².

In fact, the *tevzi defters* provide an indication that may suggest the socio-economic and institutional status of the landholders, and this is the titles that accompanied their names and the use of family names (ending in *-zade* or *-ođlı*), which suggests notability. But, even so, it is not easy to determine the exact social standing of a person in the local community only on the basis of their titles and/or professional identities. On the other hand, the fact that most names were accompanied by titles and family names, rather than being cited in the simpler form of personal and father's name, shows that many *çiftlik* holders stood above the great mass of the population. *Çiftlik* owners who bore titles that indicate that they belonged to the religious establishment and/or were literate (*efendi*, *hatib*, *hoca*, *kâtib*, *çelebi*, *imam*, *molla*) represent 26.67, 19.63, 23.29 and 33.33 per cent of the male Muslim *çiftlik* holders in 1698, 1727, 1770 and 1795, respectively. Those whose titles suggest that they themselves or their families belonged to the military and/or administrative elite (*paşa*, *sipahi*, *ağa*, *kethüda*, *beşe*, *serdar*, *çavuş*, *topçu*, *bayrakdar*) represent 33.33 per cent in 1698, 29.91 per cent in 1727, 34.25 per cent in 1770 and 42.11 per cent in 1795. To these categories we can add those Muslims who bore religious titles of distinction, suggesting elite status or at least relative affluence (even though, admittedly, we cannot be absolutely sure about it), such as *el-hac* and *seyyid*, as well as family names ending in *-zade* or *-ođlı*. Such cases represent 30 per cent of male Muslim *çiftlik* holders in 1698, 29.91 per cent in 1727, 34.25 per cent in 1770 and 17.54 per cent in 1795.

Apart from the fact that the number of non-chiftlicised villages steadily diminished in the course of the eighteenth century, a comparison of the data of two *tevzi defters* of 1727 and 1770 shows that the number of villages that were holdings of only one landowner rose drastically in the course of time. Thus, out of 39 *çiftlik* villages in 1727, 28 had estates of more than one *çiftlik* holder registered in them against eleven villages where only one landholder was recorded. These figures change

⁵¹ Some names of landholders imply that their bearers or their ancestors were not of local origin (e.g., Hırvat Ali, Grebenevî Mustafa, Mısrî Efendi, Manastırlı İbrahim), but they are only a few. Besides, we do not know if these persons might have settled in the region and thus become localised.

⁵² On the relationship between central and provincial elites, see Ariel Salzmann, „An Ancien Régime Revisited: ‘Privatization’ and Political Economy in the Eighteenth Century Ottoman Empire”, in *Politics and Society*, 21, 1993, pp. 393-423; Ali Yaycıođlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2016.

radically in the second half of the century: in 1770, out of 84 registered *çiftlik* villages, 48 were attributed to only one person. Moreover, half of the remaining 36 villages had only two landholders recorded in them. Thus, not only did the local elite manage to gain control of whole villages, but progressively the number of people who controlled land in any single village was diminished to often one or maybe two.

TABLE 4. Number of landholders in *çiftlik* villages according to *tevzi defters* of Veroia of 1727 and 1770

	1727	1770
Çiftlik villages (total)	39	84
With one landholder	11 (28.2%)	48 (57.1%)
With two landholders	6 (15.4%)	17 (20.2%)
With more than two landholders	22 (56.4%)	19 (22.6%)

Table 5 complements Table 4. It focuses on villages with more than two landholders and shows that in these cases, too, the general tendency was towards fewer landholders as time progressed. On the basis of evidence such as this, one may assume that the more powerful members of the local elite were able to buy or appropriate the *çiftlik*s of lesser notables and to enlarge their estates⁵³. For example, there were fourteen landholders in the village of Palatiça in 1727 and only five in 1770, a clear indication of accumulation of land in the hands of fewer over the course of the century. To give another example, a total of 79 individuals were listed in the *tevzi defter* of 1770 as *çiftlik* holders, but only 59 twenty-five years later. However, a word of caution is in order here, because, as we have explained, the *tevzi defter* of 1795 includes 16 *alâka-ı so-and-so* entries. Therefore, it is possible that some of these *alâka* tax shares corresponded to landownership in one or more of the eleven villages of Table 5. However, we tend to assume that most of, if not all, these *alâka* shares concerned villages that were owned by one person and thus villages which were not listed in the *tevzi defter* of 1795. This is the case, for instance, with the ten villages that were registered in the name of Halil Ağa of Katerini and his brother in the *tevzi defter* of 1770: they are absent from the *tevzi defter* of 1795, and we suppose that they were included in the *alâka* shares of the two brothers. Still, further research is needed before we can reach a definite conclusion.

⁵³ For the case of a Muslim who sued the powerful Halil Ağa of Katerini for appropriation of his deceased brother's *çiftlik*, see Anastasopoulos, „Imperial Institutions”, p. 37. However, in this case it is not explained how the word *çiftlik* was meant.

TABLE 5. Number of *çiftlik* holders in eleven villages of the district of Veroia according to *tevzi defters* of 1727, 1770 and 1795

	1727	1770	1795
Village	Number of landholders		
Monoşpita	12	6	2
Palatiça	14	5	3
Servihor	6	6	2
İstavroz	7	1	1
Veştiça	8	5	5
Asomata	7	5	3
Şehr Altı	11	6	3
Kum	5	2	1
Yancıştı	7	5	3
Likoviçista	6	4	1
Tırhoviştı	6	5	2

The *tevzi defters* also allow us to follow the expansion of the rural property of specific persons and families. With land being an important asset and source of revenue, *çiftlik*s apparently became a vehicle for the geographical expansion of the influence of a rather small number of local families on settlements dispersed all around the judicial-administrative district of Veroia. As early as the first half of the eighteenth century, families such as the Serdarzades appear to own estates in more than one settlement. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the *çiftlik*s of five of the most important landholders in the district of Veroia in 1770. As can be seen, each of them possessed *çiftlik*s in six or more villages. The Hasanağazades, i.e. the family of Halil Ağa of Katerini, dominated the villages of the south-eastern part of the district, where in most of them they were the only landholders⁵⁴. The Eminzade family owned properties in two villages, Monoşpita and Ayamarin (mod. Agia Marina), to the north of the town of Veroia, where other *çiftlik* owners were also present, but also in villages to the south-east of the town, where they were the only landholders. Ramiz Efendi's landholdings were situated in the north-eastern part of the district; he was recorded as the only *çiftlik* holder in four of them, but he was also present in villages like Servihor and Mikroğuz with more than one landholder. Among the major landholders in Mikroğuz were the Sarıcazade family, who

⁵⁴ Only in Palâni (near mod. Sfindami) was there also a certain Ali Ağa, and in Ayo Yani (mod. Ano Agios Ioannis [?]) there were also independent farmers.

had *çiftliks* registered in their name in eleven villages, mostly to the north of the town of Veroia. Finally, Zaim Mustafa Ağa was a landholder in three villages close to the town of Veroia and three further away; in only one out of the six was he the only landholder.

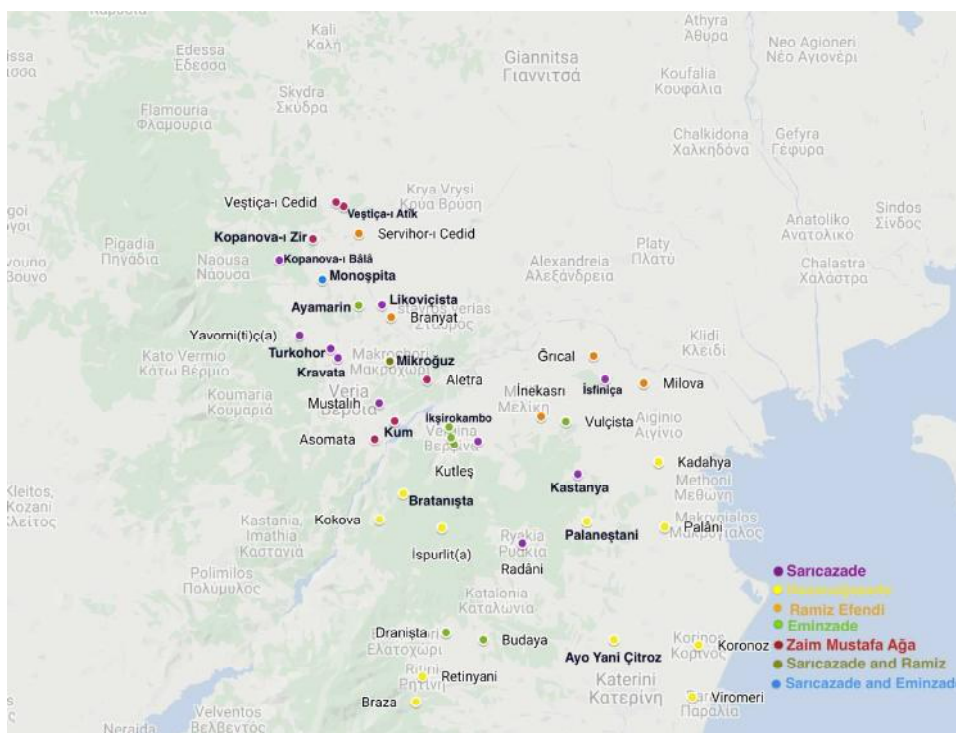


Figure 3. Villages under the control of five of the most important landholders in the district of Veroia according to KKS-GR 91/860-863 (1770).

Conclusion

In our paper we have tried to show that *tevzi defters* are a category of historical sources that may provide useful information for the study of landholding. At the same time, we have tried to point out the limitations and pitfalls involved in the use of their data.

Çiftliks, in the sense of concentration of control of rural land in the hands of the few, were an expanding phenomenon in the eighteenth-century Ottoman provinces, and the *tevzi defters* of Veroia show them to be an important feature in the rural life of this district, too. Throughout the century, *çiftliks* appear to have expanded at the expense of peasant holdings, and villages increasingly came under the control of a relatively small number of predominantly elite male Muslims. As we have discussed in the paper, phenomena such as the *çiftliks*, the empowerment of local and regional elites, and evolving accounting practices were Empire-wide and should be studied in such a framework. It is through such a perspective that we can better interpret and evaluate both the *tevzi defters* and developments in the district of Veroia.