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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KADI REGISTERS (SER'İYYE SICİLLERİ) OF THE IOANNINA, MANASTIR, AND SHKODER PROVINCES FOR STUDIES OF THE OTTOMAN PERIOD*

Osmanlı Dönemi Araştırmaları İçin Yanya, Manastır ve İşkodra Vilayetleri Kadı Sicillerinin (Şer'iyye Sicilleri) Önemi

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Abstract: Albania, which was part of the Rumeli region for almost five centuries during the Ottoman Administration, currently preserves a large collection of records in its Central Archive pertaining to the aforementioned period. Consequently, Albania can be considered as the most important and richest holder of these records in the Balkans, in terms of quantity and content. These documents are written in Turkish, Arabic and Persian. Among them are the Kadi Registers (Ser'iyye Sicilleri) of the Ioannina, Manastır, and Shkoder provinces. Although extensive research has been conducted, the Kadi Registers of the Kosova province have unfortunately not yet been found. The collection of Kadi Registers of the Ioannina, Manastır and Shkoder provinces chronologically begins in the year 1529, with the registers of Elbasan (copies), and ends in the year 1926, with the registers of the city of Berat. The Kadi Registers of the city of Berat, historically recognized as mahkeme-i ser'iyye Belgrad-i Arnavud, begins in 1602. They are nearly complete, saved in their original format, and include 211 files. These registers are recorded in the form of an encyclopaedia and contain information regarding the history of Albania, the Balkans, and the entire world.

Key Words: Ottoman Empire, kadi registers, Ioannina, Manastır, Shkoder

Özet: Rumeli'nin bir parçası olan ve beş yüz yıl boyunca Osmanlı yönetiminde kalan Arnavutluk'un Osmanlı hâkimiyetindeki yıllarına ait bilgiler içeren geniş bir belge koleksiyonu Arnavutluk Devlet Merkez Arşivi'nde bulunmaktadır. Bu yönüyle Arnavutluk Merkez Arşivi, Balkanlar'daki emsallerine göre, miktar ve içerik açısından önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu belgeler Türkçe, Arapça ve Farsça yazılmıştır. Söz konusu belgeler içinde Yanya, Manastır ve İşkodra vilayetlerinin şer'iyye sicilleri de bulunmaktadır. Maalesef Kosova vilayetinin Kadı Sicilleri, bugüne kadar yapılmış araştırmalara rağmen bulunamamıştır. Yanya, Manastır ve İşkodra vilayetlerinin kadı sicilleri, kronolojik bakımından Elbasan sancağı (kopya) kayıtlarıyla 1529 yılında başlayıp Berat sancağı kayıtları ile 1926 yılında sona ermektedir. Belgrad-ı Arnavud mahkeme-i şer'iyye sicilatı gibi tarihli olarak tanımlayan Berat sancağının Kadı Sicilleri, orijinal formatında kaydedilmiş ve 211 dosyadan meydana gelmiştir. Bir ansiklopedi şeklinde olan bu sicilat Arnavutluk, Balkanlar ve dünyanın diğer yerlerinin tarihleri ile ilgili bilgileri içermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, şer'iyye sicilleri, Yanya, Manastır, İşkodra

Albania, which was part of the Rumeli region for almost five centuries during the Ottoman Administration (1506-1912), currently preserves a large collection of records in its Central Archive pertaining to the aforementioned period. The National Archive of the Republic of Albania, located in Tirana, preserves a considerable number of collections written in the Ottoman language. Among them are the invaluable collections of court registers pertaining to three provinces: the Ioannina Province (Berat, Delvine, Ioannina, Lushnje, Permet, Tepelene, Vlore), the Manastır Province (Elbasan, Korce, Ohri, Peklin), and the Shkoder Province (Durrës, Gjakove, Kruje, Shkoder, Tirana, Tivari, Ulkin, Zadrime, Lezhe). These collections are

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rich in number and historical significance. There is another collection of registers which, if found, would prove just as valuable to researchers of the Ottoman Period; it is the collection of court registers of the province of Kosovo, which to date has not been found.

Albanian and international authors have focused their attention on these archival sources in connection to their studies of the Ottoman Period. In an article published in 1928 in *Dituria* Magazine, Mit'hat Frasheri, one of Albania's well-known intellectuals, expressed the historical significance that the provinces' court registers would come to uphold for the history of Albania. Until 1914, these registers were preserved in the offices of the Kadi, which were located in different *sancak* (sanjak) centres, however, the beginning of the First World War brought with it the destruction of a large number of documents, which were conserved in Albanian territories. "From my personal inquiries, I have learned that in Elbasan, these types of registers were completely unaffected from other fires or catastrophes, and were kept in sixty-four large books covered with hide. But, unfortunately, during the Balkan War of 1912, when the Serbs occupied the city, all of the court records were misplaced along with financial and kadastro records,"¹ writes Mit'hat Frasheri.

However, original court registers of the Sancak of Elbasan, which survived this war and the ones that followed, were conserved in Elbasan's Municipal Archive until the year 1946. With the destruction of this building in that same year, it is presumed that the court registers were buried beneath the building's ruins.² These registers, which were started in the year 1529³, today consists of only transcriptions of the original records. The transcriptions and the preservation of these documents are the special merits of Lef Nosi's work, a researcher collector, and publisher of documents concerning Albanian History. For the transcriptions, Lef Nosi had assigned the job to a specialist in the Ottoman language, whom he paid himself every month.⁴

The court registers of Durres and Shkoder underwent a similar misfortune. These registers were destroyed in 1913 during Serbian and Montenegrin military invasions⁵. From the Durres seashore, Mit'hat Frasheri himself witnessed piles of burnt documents covered in ashes in front of the government building at the time. Similarly, the documents of the Sancak of Gjirokaster were either destroyed or displaced. Mit'hat Frasheri notes that when the Greeks invaded southern parts of Albania, they took all of the documents that were archived in Gjirokastra's municipal offices, and sent them to Ioannina.⁶ Therefore, his wish was to see that those documents, which survived the fires and the animosity of people, were preserved, organized, and protected from corrosion or moisture.⁷ Another historian of the Ottoman Empire, Syrja Vlora, also known as Avlonyali Sureyya in Turkish historiography, accentuates the important role that the court registers play when writing about Albanian history.⁸

The register which has been best preserved to date is the register of the Sancak of Berat. The Sancak of Berat had a long-standing tradition for preserving historical documents despite the natural disasters and wars that took place throughout the centuries. Those who represented the sancak's administration and religious institutions held a high sense of appreciation for culture and knowledge. Even in the toughest of situations, they made an effort to save their documents. The residents and employees of this city would leave the preservation of sacred documents as a testament for the next generation. Osman Myderrizi, one of the

¹ Lumo Skendo, "Burime historike te Shqiperise", "Dituria", Tirane, Tetor 1928, V. III, nr. 12, p. 366.

² Kujtim Nuro "Dokumentet Osmane ne arkivatshqiptare", Tirane: Amfioni & Zeli, 2000, p. 48.

³ The different researchers in their published works had recorded as the beginning of this registers 1580 year.

⁴ Nuro, "Dokumente Osmane", p. 49.

⁵ Skendo, "Burime historike", p. 366.

⁶ Skendo, "Burime historike", p. 366.

⁷ Skendo, "Burime historike", p. 366.

⁸ Avlonyali Sureyya Bey, *Osmanli Sonrasi Arnavutluk (1912 - 1920)*, Hazirlayan: Abdulhamit Kirmizi, Istanbul: Klasik 58 kitap, 2009, p. 80

prominent Albanian scholars of Bektashi literature, found Berat's court registers in 1950 under the rooftops of the city's Mufti, while he was searching for Ottoman documents.⁹

The registers' significance as historical sources for studies of the Ottoman period has also drawn the attention of foreign researchers such as Prof. Dr. Atilla Cetin,¹⁰ Prof. Dr. Suriaya Faroqhi,¹¹ and Prof. Dr. Vehbi Gunay.¹² Prof. Atilla Cetin emphasizes in his article that in Belgrad-i Arnavud (*Albanian Belgrade*) or Berat there are more than 200 registers belonging to the period of time between the 16th and 19th centuries. Meanwhile, Prof. Suriaya Faroqhi, while paying special attention during her work to the court registers, which are an important part of the rich documentary archives that were passed down to us from the Ottoman state, also highlights the importance of the Kadi registers in Albania. In this study she provides us with an important piece of information: in the Vatican Library there is a Kadi register belonging to the city of Vlora during the period of 1567-1568, and it is the library's oldest record on Albanian cities.¹³

The National Archive of the Republic of Albania was established on June 8, 1949.¹⁴ Collections of courts registers from the provinces of Ioanina, Shkoder and Manastir were gathered and eventually placed under preservation in this archive. These collections were classified based on the territorial boundaries of the aforementioned provinces, and within each geographical boundary, the court registers were chronologically ordered. The archivists of this archive also prepared inventories and catalogs, which serve as a great aid for researchers. The systematic catalog is divided into two periods: 16th century-1831¹⁵ and 1832-1912,¹⁶ which also includes the contents of the kadi registers. The systemization, inventory, filing, cataloging, and translation of these documents from the Ottoman language into Albanian was largely due to the work and assistance of Albanian translators as Andrea Sahatciu, Eleni Duka, Haki Sharofi, Jonuz Tafilaj, Nezir Leskoviku and Vexhi Buharaja. These registers have been one of the main sources of information for Albanian studies on the subject of Albanian history during the Ottoman Administration (1506-1912). Among such studies, one is bound to come across the work done by researchers like Ferit Duka, Ligor Mile, Petrika Thengjilli, Selami Pulaha, and Zija Shkodra.

The files of Kadi registers

In the collection of court registers from the province of Manastir, there are preserved documents about the courts of Elbasan, Korca, Ohrid and Peklin. The largest portion of these registers pertains to the court of Elbasan. Documents from this register, which begin in 1529 and ends in 1916, as mentioned before, consist only of transcriptions from the originals. Out of 130 files from the province of Manastir, one file belongs to the 16th century (1529 – 1599), fifteen files belong to the 17th century (1604 – 1684), twenty-four files belong to the 18th century (1733 -1792), fifteen files belong to the beginning of the 19th century, and sixty-eight files from the years between 1839-1912. The above mentioned files pertain to the court of Elbasan. The court of Korca has thirty files belonging to the period 1799-1916, one file from the 18th century,

⁹ Gentiana Abazi- Egro: "Familja Vlora dhe poetet shqiptare te shekullit XVIII –te", "Panorama", Tirane, 25 Nentor, 2011.

¹⁰ Atilla Cetin, *Turkiye Haricindeki Osmanli Seriyye Sicilleri Hakkinda*, *Islam Medeniyeti Mecmuasi*, Istanbul, Ocak 1981 – Rebi'ul-evvel 1401, Cilt V, Sayi I, p. 53.

¹¹ Suriaya Faroqhi, "Approaching Ottoman History", Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2004, p. 76.

¹² Vehbi Gunay, *Balkan sehir tarihleri kaynagi olarak ser'iyye sicillerin envanter ve kataloglarinin tespiti hakkinda*; *Tarih Incelemeleri Dergisi*, Cilt/ Volume XVIII, Sayi / Number 2, Aralik/ December 2003, p. 76.

¹³ Suriaya Faroqhi, "Approaching Ottoman history", p. 76.

¹⁴ Mihallaq Pela, *Sherbimi Arkivor ne Shqiperi (1945 – 1990)*, Tirane: "GREVIS", 2001, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Drejtoria e Pergjithshme e Arkivave te Shtetit (The General Directory of State Archives (DPASH): Katalogu Sistematik i dokumenteve (Shek. VI – 1831)*, Prepared by A. Nika, E. Duka, F. Duka, M. Pela, N. Hoxha, V. Kita, V. Pacuka, Tirane, 1979, 982 pages.

¹⁶ *DPASH: Katalogu Sistematik I dokumenteve (1832 – 1912)*, Prepared by : A. Nika, E. Duka, N. Najdeni, N. Hoxha, V. Kita, V. Pacuka, Tirane, 1982.

sixty-eight files for the 1839-1912 years, and ten files for the 1913-1918 years. Meanwhile, the court of Ohri and the court of Peklin each have one file preserved, belonging to the years 1675 and 1838, respectively. A great number of court registers from the province of Manastir are today preserved in the archives of Skopje (Macedonia).¹⁷

A wealth of great historical value also can be found in the collection of court registers from the province of Ioannina, which contains the court registers of Berat, Delvine, Gjirokaster, Ioannina, Lushnje, Permet, Tepelene, and Vlore. In the middle of this rich collection, the Register of Berat primarily stands out due to its large number of records as well as its historical contribution. Those who research this register will find almost a full reflection of the series of historical events in all fields of study not only for Albania, the Balkans, and Europe, but even wider. This register, covering a time span from 1602-1926, consists of 211 files, of which ninety are full registers and 121 are files with loose documents. Twenty files belong to the 17th century (1602-1682), nine files belong to the 18th century (1707-1765) and eight files belong to the 19th century (1803 to 1839). Even after the Tanzimat period, when the duties and powers of the Kadi were reduced, the number of records in this register remained large. For the years 1839 to 1912 alone, there exist 127 files, of which sixty-one are complete registers and sixty-six are files with loose documents. There are also twenty-four files for the years 1913-1925.

On the other hand, registers from the courts of other cities in this province, are fewer in number. The court of Delvina contains three files from the years 1653-1802; the court of Gjirokaster contains six files from 1700-1839, six files from 1839-1872, and one file for the year 1913. The court of Janine contains one file from 1825, and five files from 1852 to 1868; the court of Vlora contains two files from 1628-1827, eleven files from 1849-1912, and three files from 1913-1917. The court of Lushnja contains two files from 1914, and one file from 1916; the court of Permet contains one file from 1865. The court of Tepelena contains two files from 1875.

Additionally, the register collection from the province of Shkodra also represents an important historical source, especially for northern Albania. This register consists of 200 files which cover the years 1443-1921. This collection, which includes the courts of Durres, Shkoder, Kruje, Lezhe and Zadrime, Podgorice, and Tirane, has only seven complete registers; the rest of the files consist of loose documents. The court of Shkodra itself contains one file from the 16th century (1530), fourteen files from the 18th century (1712-1799), and fifty-six files from the 19th century (1801-1839). For the court of Durres, only three files have been preserved, which belong to the year 1916. The court of Kruje contains two files belonging to the 17th century (1600-1684), one file for the year 1782, ten files for the years 1801-1838, nineteen files for the years 1846-1892, and two files, of which one belongs to the year 1913 and the other to the years 1916-1925. The court of Lezhe and Zadrime has a total of seven files, two of which belong to the years 1443 and 1448 respectively. These two files contain information regarding the property ownership rights of some displaced families from the village Peshtraq of Gjakove who were relocated in Nderfane of Zadrime. Two other files contain loose acts belonging to the 19th century (1802-1839). The rest of the files contain information post-1840. The court of Podgorica has two files, one from 1846 and one from 1849. The registers of this court are held in the archives of Montenegro. The court which has a considerable number of registers in this province is the court of Tirana. The Register of Tirana contains a total of 133 files. Until 1839, the court of Tirana was comprised only of loose documents. This register begins in the 18th century (1760) with a sale transaction and proceeds with fifty-nine files belonging to the years 1800-1839, seven files belonging for the years 1862-1912, and sixteen files for the years 1913-1916.

¹⁷ Atilla Cetin, "Turkiye Haricindeki..." p. 53. Also, see: Suraiya Faroqi: "Approaching Ottoman History", p. 76.

The dimensions of the aforementioned court registers are not all the same. The court registers of Berat are generally 42.5 cm x 17 cm, but there are also registers measuring 47 cm x 17 cm. Registers with larger dimensions can be found in the records of Elbasan. Although they are copies, these registers measure 49 cm x 16.5 cm.

The ink

The ink that was used to record the firmans, ilams (census records), huccets, buyurultus and all other documents, was black ink, which today is similar in quality to India ink. This kind of ink, prepared from special recipes, has retained its color and illumination over the centuries, making the documents easier to read. Generally, when the Kadi finished copying a document that was given to him, in order to prove the document's authenticity, he would include the following note: "It is one with its original, which must be obeyed. It was written by kadi Haxhi Jahjai. May God bless him. It landed upon our hands on the first of Muharrem in the year 1100 (1689)." On some documents, the name of the deliverer was also included, because in the Ottoman Empire documents were delivered by horse couriers or guides.

The firman that contained a summary of outstanding mukata taxes in 1679 was submitted by Abdi Celebiu.¹⁸ The firman for the possession of a chiflik in Berat was handed by Ali, the court caush of the Sublime Porte.¹⁹ In the Ottoman chancellery special attention was also devoted to the type of paper that was used. Letters and documents exchanged between the central and local administrations were written on specific types of paper. The registers in the aforementioned collections are written on yellow tinted paper, which is a little bit thick and smooth and whose method of processing allowed the quality of the writing to withstand time. Generally, after they were finished with their work, the kadis would preserve the registers in safe places away from moisture. They would place them into bags and hang them on the walls of their offices. In a letter sent from the sancak of Dibra to the kaza of Elbasan on March 5, 1300 (March 17, 1884), the following instructions were included: "Considering the fire that broke out in the government building of Samsun, where several documents were burned, it is instructed that special attention be devoted to the preservation of documents by placing them every night into bags and storing them in safe places."²⁰

Time Spans

The collection of court registers for the three provinces (Ioannina, Shkoder, and Manastir) covers a time span from 1443–1926. The collection begins with two ilams from the court of Lezhe and Zadrime, which was part of the province of Shkoder. The ilams are written in 1443 and 1448 and they contain information regarding property ownership rights of some displaced families who moved from the village of Pashtriq in Gjakove to the village of Nderfane in Zadrime. The collection ends in 1926, which is the end date of the court registers of Berat province.

Summary of kadi registers

The basic duties of the kadi are outlined in the Ottoman Kanunname of 1535,²¹ which up until the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms of 1839, were quite extensive. His duties gave the kadi more power in the sancak. In addition, he was the chief liaison between the Sublime Porte and its subordinate administrative units as well as the commander and implementer of the decisions made by the Sultan. Therefore, in these registers, the kadi recorded in full not just imperial decrees, but also berats, bujurulldi, ilams, vakufnamets, fetvate, hucete, demands, complaints from the population, etc. He recorded these documents in a chronological manner,

¹⁸ AQSH I RSH, F. 130, D. 368, p. 1

¹⁹ AQSH I RSH, F. 130, D. 16, p. 74 - 75

²⁰ AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 3, p. 233

²¹ Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarihi Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul: MEB, 1993, Cilt. II, p. 119-125.

according to the date they were sent or received, regardless of importance or the type of its content. Perhaps this does not pose any rarity, but nonetheless it is impressive to see that in one file one may find a list of prices for agricultural products and livestock for the city of Berat, hycet for taking over market taxes, ilam for determining borders, and among these documents a firman of the Sublime Porte to ban the activities of Osman Muriqi's group from Murriqan of Tepelene in Ioannina, Vlore, and Delvine.²²

Their value for history studies

The values of the content found in these important archival sources, for studies on the subject of Albanian history and the Ottoman Empire, can be classified into summaries as follows:

1. Records regarding the organization and administration of provinces, sancaks, kaza and nahiye as administrative units of the Albanian territories before and after the Tanzimat reforms, until 1912 when Albania became an independent state. Their number, designation, administrative organization and their scope changed constantly due to requests from the population and the political situation of the Ottoman Empire.

2. Records that are legal in nature, are evidence of the implementation of judicial rights in Albanian Ottoman territories. The largest portion of documents in this group consists of laws, imperial decrees, the roles of the seri'ye (court records), huccets (evidences) for sale and ownership transactions, division and inheritance of properties, the assignments of guardians for orphans, marriages, divorces, diyet prices, the penalty for murder, injury, theft, etc. Based on these documents the price of a marriage crown started from 75 kurus and went up to 110 000 kurus.

3. Records about the forms of properties such as miri (state land), timar (lad with 3000 to 20,000 akce revenue), ziamet (land with 20 to 100,000 akce revenue), has (land with over 100,000 akce revenue) and vaqfs (endowments). At the beginning of the 15th century, in Albanian territories there existed thirty timars and 837 ziamets with 335 520 00 akce, where as by the end of the 15th century, there were 212 timars and 2043 ziamete with 15 500 00 akce.²³ We can also mention in this group the vakufname (endowment document) of Mimar Kasim, written in the year 1641 for leaving as vaqf his properties which were the sancak of Berat, in Gramsh, Dushnik, Shpat (Elbasan), Tomorricë (Skrapar), Vlore, Istanbul etc.²⁴ In these registers there are also records related to the dissemination and organization of the cifliks (farmland large enough to be powered by two oxens) in Albania²⁵, as well as relations between the farmer and the owners. Based on a firman from 1842, the farmers of the sancak of Berat had participated in the extraction of salt from Seman Lake.²⁶ We can also mention a firman from 1845, which ordered the sale of three of Ali Pasha's cifliks, located in the sancak of Berat.²⁷ Many of the records are related to the possessions of the richest Albanian families, which in that period included the Bushatlli family in North Albania, the Bicakci family in Central Albania, and the Vlora family in southern Albania²⁸. Besides these cifliks,²⁹ in Albania the Sublime Porte also had its royal cifliks.

4. Records concerning the economic development in Albanian territories from the 16th century until the beginning of the 20th century. The foundation of these records consists of

²² AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 16, p. 95.

²³ Historia e Popullit Shqiptar (The History of Albanian People): Akademia e Shkencave te Shqiperise (The Science Academy of Albania (Instituti i Historise – The Institute of History)), Vol. I, Tirane: Toena, 2002, p. 519.

²⁴ AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 123, p. 1-15.

²⁵ AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 55, p. 44, 54, 57.

²⁶ AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 55, f. 54.

²⁷ AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 1, f. 15.

²⁸ AQSH I RSH, F. 129, D. 13.

²⁹ A wide private farm where the farmers planted, grew animals and built their homes.

documents relating to the development of agriculture, livestock, trade, and artisanal works. Based on a firman given by the Sultan in 1714, the purchasing of grain from foreigners within Ottoman Empire territories was prohibited.³⁰ In 1706, the merchants of the villages of Voskopoya and Shipcka were allowed to exercise their activity in the cities Berat and Vlora³¹. Until the year 1844, there was a monopoly on the production and trading of moccasins (leather shoes) in the Lashova village (Permet). But, with a firman from the Sultan, permission to produce moccasins was also given to the kaza of Korca, Konica, Leskovik, Bitol, Ohri and Skopje.³² In 1848, the residents of Lashova disputed this order of the Sultan, because they wanted the production of moccasins to be their own monopoly³³. Of interest in this group are also documents which shed light on the organization of trade shows in religious institutions, and the profits that were left to them. The kadi also recorded lists of prices of agricultural products, livestock, meat loaf, boze, coffee, chestnuts, honey, olives, garlic, wheat, clothing, crafts and industrial goods, particularly in the cities of Berat and Elbasan.³⁴ In these registers there are a number of documents such as Ilams, huccets, and temessuk, associated with the creation, operation, and organization of guilds during this period in Albania. These guilds played a very important role in the economic development of the country. They were initially created in the cities of Elbasan and Berat in the 16th century.

5. One particular group of records consists of documents related to the type of taxes that the Albanian population paid during the Ottoman Empire. Among them we can mention the tax of osri, cizye, kislak, agnam, mucered, bennak, nuzul, bac, imdad-iseferiye, salariye, ispence, ciftlik, tapu, celep, avariz, nuzul, imdad-i seferiye, border taxes for export-import, taxes for entering and exiting the Ottoman Empire, taxes for the organization of ceremonies held by the Sublime Porte, etc.

6. Another group of documents, historically just as valuable, consists of documents related to the organization, structure, and development of the social and cultural aspects of Albania from the 16th century to the beginning of the 20th century. According to these registers, the Albanian cities were divided into different neighbourhoods. In the city of Berat some of the named neighbourhoods were Mahalle-i Atik, Cami Atik, Vojvoda, Murat celepi, Mahale-i Vakef etc. In the city of Shkodra, we can find neighbourhoods such as, Alibeg, Karahisay, HacıResul, Tabak etc. And in the city of Elbasan some of the neighbourhoods recorded are Arslanbey, Ebubekir Celebi, Cami- i Kebir, Meyhane, etc. In the register of Berat one can also find the names of the city's butchers recorded in detail; they were of different faiths. The names of gypsy butchers were also included. Furthermore, this group of documents contains records related to the cities' safety and peace regulations, as well as construction and renovation regulations pertaining to castles, madrasas, hamams, wells,³⁵ roads (1605) etc.³⁶

7. A significant source of information can also be found inside the group of documents which shed light on the process of islamization in the Albanian population. There are a lot of declarations from Christian people, which occurred in front of the Kadi and in the presence of witnesses, which serve as proof of their conversion to the religion of Islam. This process happened in great proportions, especially during the 17th through the 19th centuries. In the Register of Berat, there are hundreds of huccets, which reveal that many different people desired

³⁰ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 85, p. 1.

³¹ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 40, p. 44.

³² AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 67, p. 3.

³³ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 1, p. 67.

³⁴ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 10, 18, 19, 49, D. 19; F. 129, D. 1.

³⁵ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 49, p. 132.

³⁶ AQSH i RSH, F. 129, D. 2, p. 3.

to change their name from George to Ismail, Gonce to Fatime, Rrapo to Ibrahim, Dhimiter to Husein etc.³⁷

8. Documents on anti-Ottoman movements in Albania. In these registers, there are a lot of firmans and buyruks from the Sublime Porte for the prevention and suppression of anti-ottoman movements in Albanian territories in connection with non-payment of taxes. These movements, where people refused to pay taxes like cizye, kislakresmi, agnam, ispenca, nuzul, bac, imdad-I seferiye, and more, occurred mostly during the years 1695–1850 in Berat, Borsh (Saranda), Delvine, Elbasan, Frasher, Mican (Permet), Kolonje, Korce, Kruje, Kurvelesh, Ioannina, Lezhe, Mallakaster, Manastir, Mat, Muzekke, Oher, Opar, Panarit, Permet, Peqin, Pogon, Qafezes, Radovicke and Zavalan (Kolonje), Skrapar, Tepelene, Terhalla, Tomorrice, Shkoder, Skopje, Vlore, Voskopoje, etc.³⁸

9. Documents on military expeditions of the Ottoman Empire. A large number of firmans and buyurldi from the Sublime Porte are found in the Register of Berat, which hold information on military mobilizations and expeditions organized by the empire from different Albanian regions such as Berat, Drisht, Dukakkin, Elbasan, Gjirokaster, Ioannina, Korce, Kostur, Kruje, Lezhe, Muzekke, Oher, Peklin, Permet, Pogon, Skrapar, Shkoder, Skopje, Tomorr, Vlore, etc.³⁹. In addition to Ottoman military expeditions in Albanian territories, these registers also contain many documents about the battles that occurred during the invasion of Korfuz (1776)⁴⁰, the battles between the Turkish army and the Russian army (1678, 1711, 1733, 1737) and the expeditions of the Ottoman Army against Austria, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, and Serbia, during the years 1696–1897.

In these registers, especially in the Register of Berat, there are also a large number of documents related to the exchange and counterfeiting of Turkish currency, as well as documents that reveal that taking Turkish currency outside of the Ottoman Empire was prohibited.

10. At the centre of these collections, are documents that reveal the diplomatic relations between the High Porte and the Albania population, as well as its relations with other countries. The Sultan sent a number of firmans for the construction and reconstruction of churches in neighbourhoods like Mangalem and Gorica (Berat 1842), Shenkoll, Elbasan (1849), Shkoder (1850), etc.⁴¹. There are also many imperial decrees for the release of different persons from slavery. Evidence of this fact is a buyurldi that belongs to the year 1701 for the release in Preze (Tirana) of one slave from Peja (Kosova), because according to the royal decree, it was decided that the residents of the Sancaks of Dukagjin and Prizren, who had survived the Serbian invasion, were not to be considered as slaves.⁴² A number of hucets and buyurultus provide proof for the existence of slavery. Among them we can highlight a hucet from 1674 which shows the sale of a Hungarian slave woman⁴³, the appeal of a woman from Berat in 1696 to a person who took her daughter as a slave,⁴⁴ the firman of 1816 for the release of different persons from slavery and the measures taken against persons who took children as slaves seeking rewards for their releases.⁴⁵ The Sultan displayed special attention to the requests, complaints and protests of the population. He requested that the sancaks and their kadis carefully address the people's requests and provided them with fair solutions.⁴⁶ Additionally,

³⁷ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 55.

³⁸ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 2, p. 11-12, D. 3, p. 94, 96, 130-131; D. 8, p. 7, 9, 24, 28-33, D. 9, p. 19-21, 30-33; D. 10, p. 8, 13; D. 11, F. 42-43, D. 17, p. 72-73, 96; D. 18, p. 30-31; D. 21, p. 71, D. 81, p. 2-7.

³⁹ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 18, p. 35-36, D. 81, p. 2.

⁴⁰ AQSH i RSH, D. 3, f. 31-32.

⁴¹ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 55, p. 61.

⁴² AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 21, p. 71.

⁴³ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 4, p. 61.

⁴⁴ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 81, p. 3.

⁴⁵ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 19, p. 45.

⁴⁶ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 213, p. 1, 2, D. 212, p. 1.

the Sublime Porte requested that the kadis recognized the rights of the Orthodox and Catholic communities as well as their institutions.⁴⁷ In one of the firmans that the Sultan addressed to the sancak of Oher, the authorities, and the kadi of Durres in 1856, it is written that, since the population of the city of Durres did not have a church, and they desired one, they were given permission to build one,⁴⁸ because the Sultan's desire was for all citizens to be able to enjoy complete peace.

11. A group of documents reflect the contributions of the Albanian people to the history of the Ottoman Empire, in military, administration, political, economic, and cultural fields. The streets of Istanbul and other cities, which served as liaison routes for the centre of the Sublime Porte, were paved and maintained in that period by Albanian workers. The Albanian people were known as famous stonemasons, capable of building mosques, hamams, castles, bridges, wells, etc. In 1716, the Sultan sent a firman to the sancak of Berat requesting 200 Stonemasons from the province of Mallakaster to repair roads and bridges from Janina to Saranda.⁴⁹

12. Documents related to the history of other countries of the Balkans, Europe, and beyond. Researchers of these registers will find rich archival resources related to the history of Britain, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Montenegro, Serbia, the Vatican, etc. Among numerous documents, we can highlight the firman of 1828 regarding the Anglo-French-Russian coalition, which supported the Greek movement,⁵⁰ the firman of 1857 regarding the Turkish-Greek treaty for the creation of Greek consulates in different countries of the Ottoman Empire,⁵¹ and the firman of 1873, by which the Sultan recognized, in Durres, the Austro-Hungary consulate's rights sanctioned in the joint treaties that were signed between the two countries.⁵²

13. In these registers, the Kadi recorded not only the documents received by the central authorities, or the decisions that he made, but he also recorded, in chronological order, all the important events that occurred, be it political, social, or natural phenomena that took place during the time he was employed in the sancak. Among them we can mention two notes written in 1687. One note is linked to the organization of an assembly by the people of the sancak of Vlora regarding various problems that concerned them⁵³. The other note was about a substantial number of flies that appeared from the ground in the southern region of the city of Berat.⁵⁴ Researchers will find many other records related to natural phenomena such as the earthquake in 1714 and the damages that it caused.⁵⁵

In conclusion, the collection of registers of the aforementioned courts is a very important source of information for historical studies of the Ottoman period. These registers shed light on all aspects of life, including political, economic, military, social, cultural, and religious, not only for the history of the Albanian people, but also for other countries that were under Ottoman administration as well. A facility where these collections can be digitalized and published would be of great convenience to researchers of this period who wish to utilize them.

⁴⁷ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 50, p. 55.

⁴⁸ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 23, p. 21, 26, 33.

⁴⁹ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 8, p. 25.

⁵⁰ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 23, f. 21, 26, 33.

⁵¹ AQSH i RSH, F. 128, D. 7, p. 43.

⁵² AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 19, f. 32.

⁵³ . AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 19, f. 32.

⁵⁴ . AQSH I RSH, F. 128, D. 19, f. 33.

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