



cilt
2

BALKANLARDA
İSLÂM
MİADI DOLMAYAN UMUT

İSLAM IN THE BALKANS
UNEXPIRED HOPE

TÜRKİSTAN'DAN BALKANLARA
FROM TURKESTAN TO THE BALKANS

EDİTÖR
MUHAMMET SAVAŞ KAFKASYALI



ANKARA - BELGRADE - BUCHAREST - BUDAPEST - CHISINAU - KIEV
PODGORICA - SARAJEVO - SKOPJE - TIRANA - ZAGREB





İnceleme Araştırma Dizisi

Yayın No:19

BALKANLARDA İSLAM
MİADI DOLMAYAN UMUT

Cilt 2: Türkistan'dan Balkanlara
From Turkestan to the Balkans

Editör

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Balkanlarda İslam: Türkistan'dan Balkanlara - *From Turkestan to the Balkans*

/ **Editör:** Dr. Muhammet Savaş Kafkasyalı

Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı 2016 5.c.
(2902 s.) ; 16*24 cm T.C. Başbakanlık Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı
inceleme-araştırma-dizisi; yayın no:19

İçindekiler:

c.1: Muğlaklıktan Berraklığa / *From Ambiguity to Clarity*

c.2: Türkistan'dan Balkanlara / *From Turkestan to the Balkans*

c.3: Gönül Fethinden Zihniyet Temsiline / *From the Conquest of
Hearts to the Representation of Mentality*

c.4: Vakti Azizden Vakti Zelalete / *From Times of Glory to Times of Humility*

c.5: Köprüler Yıkan Zihniyetin Yıkılışı / *Demolishing Mentality Which Demolishes Bridges*

ISBN: 978-605-9642-11-8 - Takım

ISBN: 978-605-9642-13-2 - Cilt-2

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Baskı Tarihi: 2016

Baskı Yeri: Ankara

Baskı ve Cilt: Eflal Matbaacılık

Sertifika No: 13987

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GMK Bulvarı No:140 / Anadolu Meydanı

PK: 06570 Çankaya/ANKARA

Tel: +90 312 939 70 00

Fax: +90 312 939 75 15-16

www.tika.gov.tr



Importance of Isa Beg and His Family on Islamization of the Balkans

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Summary

This article is about the 1389 Kosovo Battle followed by the conquest of Skopje in 1391 and the services and activities provided by Yiğit Paşa, his son Ghazi Ishak Bey and Grandchild Isa Bey to the Ottoman State starting in the 14th century which played an important role in the conquest starting with Skopje and its vicinity and the regions of Bosnia and Sandzak.

This elite family made major contributions for the establishment of Turkish-Islam dominance and culture during not only the conquest of what is Macedonia today but to the conquest and development of regions which are significant for the Balkans such as Kosovo, Sandzak and particularly Sarajevo.

Important cities in the Balkans such as Skopje, Prizren, Sandzak and Sarajevo as well as cultural heritage such as mosques, madrasahs, libraries, schools, inns, baths and especially the foundations and revenues established for their sustenance are also important.

Balkanların İslamlaşmasında İsa Bey ve Ailesinin Önemi

Özet

Bu makalede 1389 Kosova Meydan Muharebesi ve akabinde 1391'de Üsküp'ün fethiyle birlikte Osmanlı Devleti'nin 14. asrın başından itibaren başta Üsküp ve civarı ile Bosna ve Sancak bölgelerinin fethinin gerçekleşmesinde önemli rol oynayan Yiğit Paşa, oğlu Gazi İshak Bey ve torunu Gazi İsa Bey'in gerçekleştirdiği hizmetler ve faaliyetlerden bahsedilmektedir.

Sadece günümüz Makedonya bölgesinin fethi değil, Kosova, Sancak ve özellikle Saraybosna'nın fethi ve geliştirilmesi gibi Balkan coğrafyasının önemli bölgelerinde Türk-İslam hakimiyeti ve kültürünün yerleşmesi açısından bu seçkin ailenin büyük katkıları söz konusudur.

Başta Üsküp, Prizren, Sancak ve Saraybosna gibi önemli şehirler olmak üzere Balkan coğrafyasında cami, medrese, kütüphane, mektep, han, hamam gibi kültürel mirasın ve de özellikle bunların idamesi için oluşturulan vakıflar ve iradlar açısından da önem arz etmektedir.

Introduction

One of the main institutions that had enormous role in the economy of the newly conquered countries by the Ottoman Empire was the Foundation (the Waqf institution). The Waqf had a crucial role not only in the feudal system, but also in the urban economy, the development of monetary relations and the accumulation of capital. But there is another point that makes the Foundation (Waqf) to be a very important institution and that is the fact that it had a significant role in forming the Ottoman feudal class in the territory of the Balkan Peninsula. Namely, in case of absence of any initiative by the state to invest in the towns, the Waqf foundation emerged as the only investor who built, who supported trade and crafting, accumulated the existing capital and earned from it. One foundation could possess dozens of villages with arable lands which brought huge incomes to the owner of that foundation. For that reason, certain persons who generally were connected to the military structure of the state and were influential military commanders, turned the large properties that they have received from the Sultan as gifts for their military achievements into Waqf foundations, with the main goal to thus protect their properties from being taken away by the state. In this way they became extraordinarily rich landowners who started to form capital which later they invested in various buildings and facilities. In order to secure the capital to stay in the family and not to go out from it, in the charters of waqf (deed of trust of foundation) with which they pledged their properties to certain facilities they strictly specified that their sons will be the managers, the trustees or the so called *muteveli* of the foundation, afterwards the sons of their sons will be the trustees and subsequently on like that as long as their lineage continues. In this way the hereditary feudal aristocracy was being formed in the Balkan Peninsula and wider, which has ruled for long time in certain towns, greatly influencing their economic, urban and political development. We can see many such influential families in the territory of Macedonia which had great impact in the development of certain towns, such as the *Ohrizade* family in Ohrid, the *Ishtipzade* family in Shtip, *Evrenos-beg* family in Enixe Vardar, then in the territory of Bulgaria the *Mihaloglu* family in Tatar-pazardjik etc.

The same significance as the said families had for the above mentioned towns, the family of Pasha Yigit-beg had for Skopje, the conqueror of Skopje whose family will later on be known as the *Kumbaraji* family which to this present day is one of the most respected and oldest Turkish families of Skopje. Pasha Yigit-beg came to the Balkan Peninsula along with Murat I's Balkan campaigns and his family presented one of the most important tools and the firmest sultan base for the staying of the Ottoman empire in the European ground. During those first years crucial for the European future of the Ottoman empire his family was unquestionably loyal to the Osman dynasty. Pasha Yigit-beg and his successors have participated in almost all important battles led by the Ottoman sultans in the Balkan territory during the second half of the XIV and the first half of the XV century. That is the

period when the rule in this peninsula is broken and the Ottomans definitively succeed to establish themselves in its ground, remaining there as the dominant power in the next several centuries. However, the true commencement, the actual beginning of this family's power should be connected with Isa-beg, the nephew of Pasha Yigit-beg, who became one of the biggest, most powerful feudals in the Balkan Peninsula, whose wealth was acquired in the above described manner, i.e. through the waqf institution. This military commander of Skopje became one of the most powerful men in the Ottoman Balkan provinces in the XV century, through whom the Ottoman empire gradually established itself throughout the whole peninsula. As the son of Ishak-beg the second ottoman commander of Skopje and the grandson of Pasha Yigit-beg the conqueror of Skopje, was one of the most important pillars of the ottoman state in the Balkans in the times when it wasn't yet rooted and seated firmly enough on the European soil. He is a classical example of an ottoman feudal lord, who, owing to his predecessors' military achievements, arrived to the point where he could contact directly with the sultan and for a certain period of time to lead independently the politics of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Peninsula on his own. His influence and role were not significant only for political and military aspects, much stronger and lasting was the heritage he left in the spiritual and cultural sphere. The institutions he founded, the towns he formed, the buildings he constructed in them even up till today witness his enormous riches and wealth and even more his impact and power in a wide area of the Balkans. Therefore, the activities of this man in all the spheres of life were unique and irreplaceable contribution for the expansion of the Ottoman domination throughout the whole Balkan Peninsula and they also had great significance for the history of the Ottoman Empire itself. Following his conquests and forming of new towns and religious-social institutions, actually sheds light on the ways and methods of the gradual establishment of the Ottomans rule and its strengthening on the European soil. The powerful family of Isa-beg, whose growth began in Skopje, one of the most important military crossroads in the Balkan territory, presents a paradigm according to which other famous Ottoman families stationed in important towns in the European territory can be analyzed. This kind of approach to the study of the Ottoman society at a lower level, out of the big conquests, campaigns and battles, can greatly contribute to understanding the fast expansion, the survival and the strengthening of the Ottoman Empire in territories where the Christian population constantly had a huge numerical preponderance over the Muslim population.

The independence of Isa-beg came to the fore and was emphasized particularly during his actions on northwest, especially when he turned towards Bosnia and Dubrovnik. The people in Dubrovnik considered Isa-beg as the true lord of Bosnia even before the final conquest of Bosnia in 1463. Starting from that year, Isa-beg stayed in the township Vrhbosna more frequently where by building his waqf foundations he laid the foundations of today's Sarajevo. He also

played a crucial role in the final conquest of Bosnia, when he burst directly with his detachment into Herzegovina as vanguard of the armies led by sultan Mehmet II the conqueror. These military interventions of Isa-beg brought him huge privileges and properties and made him one of the richest feudal lords in the Balkans, whose yearly income was over 700.000 akches. He created his own waqf foundation in Skopje which comprised few villages and many facilities, buildings and shops in the Skopje bazaar. His monumental constructions in the old core of Skopje actually round up the oriental look of the town. After the conquest of Bosnia and the abolition of the Skopje borderland so called Skopsko Krajishte, a new borderland has been established, called Bosansko Krajishte or the Bosnian borderline. The base of this new territorial interim borderland military administrative unit was the town Sarajevo where Isa-beg himself has moved and settled as the main commander. The buildings that still exist today in Sarajevo, again testify the power Isa-beg had, but also his role in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire in these regions. After his death he was succeeded by his son and heir Kebir Mehmed-beg (1440-1527) who took over the duties Isa-beg performed. This representative of the Kumbaraji family, who participated in the conquest of the Albanian port Drach and was the sanjakbeg of the Sanjak Elbasan, after the conquest of Egypt during the reign of sultan Selim Yavuz (1512-1520), was appointed as commander in Cairo, and also has participated in the conquest of Gaza. The glorious days of the Kumbaraji family come to an end with Kebir Mehmed Celebi for a certain period, although the family continued to grow and exist, keeping Skopje as its center.

One of the most significant representatives of this family (on his mother's side) in the first half of the XIX century was Hafzi-pasha (1793-1845). In 1824 he was appointed by the sultan Mahmud II (1809-1839) as mutasarraf (administrative authority) of Skopje, similarly to his predecessors in the XV century. In that time, the towns: tetovo, Kichevo, Debar, Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka, Kochani, Shtip, Radovish, Kyustendil belonged administratively and territorially to the Skopje Eyalet. His reign in the Skopje Eyalet was remembered in the history for his just, fair and humane behavior, regardless of the religion and ethnicity of the citizens and also for the several facilities he built. Namely, during his reign two major buildings were constructed that marked the life in Skopje in that period, which still exist on this very present day as proof of his power as well as his equal behavior towards everybody in the town. The first of these facilities that Hafzi-pasha built himself are his famous konaks, built in the Skopje village Bardovci, on a land that he inherited from his mother who originated from the Kumbaraji family. He also lived in those premises, whereas the external walls of the konak up till today witness to a impressive facility which could be built only by a wealthy landowner and official. Even more significant was that during his reign in Skopje, Hafzi-pasha gave permission in 1834 a church dedicated to Virgin Mary to be built in the banks of the river Vardar, called St. Bogorodica. It is also known that

besides giving the permission for building this church, he also gave financial support for its construction despite the opposition by the most fundamental Islamic representatives.

It is assumed that in the beginning of the XX century there were approximately 30 houses that belonged to the Kumbaraji family. The mayor of Skopje in the beginning of the above mentioned century, Salih Asim mentions the Kumbaraji family in his book "*History of Skopje and its surroundings*" as one of the oldest Skopje families. On the other hand, in the 30s of the XX century, the famous Turkologist Glisha Elezovic wrote:

It was a really big family. The right to take over the so called muteveli position of trustees or managers of the two oldest waqf foundations of the Mosques Ishak-beg and Isa-beg founded by the two of them was passed from one generation to the next. The right of inheritance on the other hand applied solely to the male heirs, meaning that it passes from father to son on an on until the lineage lasts. The word humbara or kumbara means bomb and the kumbarajies represented special kind of army in the Ottoman military. It is not known when this nickname became part of the family name. But what is known is that some of the Kumbaraji family members became Zaimler in Krushevac, also that in Leskivac they had huge properties and that their center was actually in Skopje. It is certain that the nickname Kumbaraji became part of the family name after Ishak-beg and Isa-beg, because in their time this name cannot be found in any document related to them.

The Kumbaraji family is one of the oldest and most prestigious, respectable Muslim families and they constitute the Skopje aristocracy and the high society. Wherever you look you can encounter with members from this family and they are considered old Skopjans. Their homes are located around the Ishak Mosque, in the neighborhood called Ishakiye. There are more than 20 of them there now. Most prominent members of the Kumbaraji family still alive are: Kemal-beg the son of Osman-beg; Emin-beg and Ekrem-beg sons of Yashar-beg; Kyamil, Mustafa and Refik sons of Husein-beg.

According to us, among them Emin-beg (1883-1962) has a special place, he was born in Skopje as the son of Yashar-beg and Eshref-hanum. Emin-beg, who finished primary school and lyseum (Licej) in his birth town, became the head of the family after taking over the lead when his father moved to Istanbul after the Balkan wars. At that time he also became the first owner of the homesteads in the Butel and Arachinovo villages. On the multiparty elections held in 1920 along with 12 other Muslim members of parliament, he was chosen as the representative of the Turkish party in the Parliament – *The Law Society for Protection of Islam*. He moved to Belgrade as a national MP from Skopje. He held two mandates on this position, whereas in the meantime he once executed the role of President of Skopje Municipality. His homestead and himself were the hosts of King Alexander Karadjordjevic during his visit to Skopje. After the capitulation of Bulgaria in 1944, in order to preserve peace in the town, he was engaged in the

city government along with other eminent persons from Skopje by the German army which was leaving the town, and he worked as security director of Skopje. During his function, by building close relationship with the German army which wanted to blow up the Stone Bridge on the river Vardar, he succeeded to convince the commanders to give up from this idea thus saving this remarkable Ottoman monument from being destroyed. After the end of the war, accused of collaboration with the enemy, on August 24, 1948 he was convicted to 10 years in prison. In the time of communism, during the collectivization by the government, all his properties in the Butel and Arachinovo villages were taken away.

After five years in prison, Emin-beg went to Turkey to undergo medical treatments in Istanbul. In 1958 he came back to Skopje in order to spend the rest of his life in his beloved birth town, where he passed away in 1962. His grave is located in the cemetery in Butel.

He left four sons and six daughters as his successors and heirs: Iskender (1914-1987), Ishak (1927), Yashar (1933-1999), Yigit (1936), Mediha (1912-1988), Suzana (1920), Olivera (1922-2000), Adile (1925), Lidija (1929) and Aneta (1931). Some of these successors if the Kumbaraji family have achieved enviable, significant careers in various scientific disciplines.

In the fields of education and culture, this family gave two outstanding, exquisitely significant scientists and pedagogues. One of them is the third daughter of Emin-beg, Professor Doctor Olivera Yashar Nasteva, who was the first woman-academician, member of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU). After her job as French Professor, in 1959 she was elected as assistant professor in the Department of South Slavic and Balkan languages, which later developed into the Department of Macedonian Language and South Slavic languages. She obtained her doctorate degree in 1962 with the dissertation titled *The Turkish Lexical Elements in the Macedonian Language*. She was awarded scientific titles and academic ranks in the Faculty of Philosophy – Skopje where she also worked as professor of History of Macedonian Language and General Linguistics. In 1979 she was appointed an external member of MANU, as well as being elected as a member of the Turkish linguistic society Türk Dil Kurumu, the same year. In 1983 she was appointed a regular member of MANU. Her scientific opus comprises around 150 bibliographic units, published in many scientific journals, anthologies and other publications. Her most famous work is her book *The Turkish Lexical Elements in the Macedonian Language* which fills a huge gap in the studies and researches for the place and role of the Turcisms in the Macedonian language and the influence of the Turkish language on the Macedonian language in a certain phase of the development of the Macedonian language. With its studiousness and significance, this unique work exceeds time and space. Its presence in the researches of the new Macedonists, Slavists shows that it hasn't lost any of its actuality. It represents most complete accomplishment in the linguistics in general which treats the problem of the turcisms in the macedonian language.

The second representative of this family, who left inerasable marks in the field of history of art, is Lidija Kumbaraji-Bogoevic, the younger daughter of Emin-beg. As an art historian, she worked many years in the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Skopje, paying special attention to the history of the cultural monuments from the Ottoman period in th ecity of Skopje and its surroundings. Her published work named *Ottoman monuments in Skopje* can be considered as a crown of her longstanding dedication to this scientific sphere, for which she received the most prestigious city award - 13 November in 1998. This work represents her lifetime achievement, dedicated exclusively to her birth town. It is a seriuos and concise work with a multidisciplinary approach which elaborates one of the most important segments in the cultural heritage of the city of Skopje. The contents of the book is written in a simple and unpretentious way which makes it easy to read and understand. It comprises all sacred and profane items and constructions from the Ottoman period, some of which still exist but also includes those that do not exost in the urban landscape of Skopje. Through them we can actullay follow the history of the city itself within 500 years. With this book, Lidija Kumbaraji-Bogoevic sent a message to everybody in Skopje about the great need to nurture and value this rich, great material cultural heritage and to overcome all animosities existing regarding this heritage. Because truly there are not many Balkan cities that can claim and boast to have authentic and very well preserved and maintained Ottoman heritage. This issue also had its luxurious edition in Turkish language, which confirms even more its enormous significance for all interested in the history of art in the Ottoman period.

At the end of this our summary, let us go back to the history and emphasize another very important point. Namely, in this kind of approach for research, study, and analyses about the expansion of the Ottoman Empire in Europe through powerful families, the question of loyalty of these big and powerful feudal lords towards the sultan and his rule attract special attention. Namely, at the zenith of their conquests they possessed enormous military power, they were far from the central government, and the territories they occupied were completely under their control and in hte hands of people loyal to them. They could very easily separate or rebel the central government and proclaim themselves independent rulers of a certain territory. Also, they could make up and launch legends about their origin from some noble families related to the past of some higly important Turkish tribes, as Osman did, they could even bring itno question the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty itself. Even more, considering the fact that they acted in the time of interregnum in the Ottoman Empire, which occured after the battle in Ankara in 1402, when sultan Bayazid was captured and killed, and when civial war has started. Namely, in those times of anarchy and the battles between the three brothers contenders of the Ottoman throne, it was very easy to declare independence to the dynasty that was collapsing. But that did not happen. So the question remains weather really the loyalty towards the Ottoman dynasty of

these big feudal lords was unwavering and if they were truly strongly committed to the loyalty to the sultan. Or maybe by that time the Ottoman dynasty already had reached the level to be perceived as the only integrating factor of the Turkish tribes which was crucial for the existence of the state system of the Turks and the most powerful people around the sultan were aware of this fact. In any case, these big feudal lords who had the most important role in the establishment of the Ottoman empire especially in the Balkan Peninsula, remained loyal to their ruler, thus enabling continued rule of the Ottoman dynasty for over 600 years.

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