IMPORTANCE OF THE PRIME MINISTRY OTTOMAN ARCHIVES
FOR HISTORICAL SOURCES OF THE BALKAN COUNTRIES

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INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE:
CURRENT TASKS OF THE ARCHIVES IN TIMES OF TRANSITION

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Paper presented in the “Round Table Meeting of the General Directors of State Archives of the Balkan Countries” held in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia between 10-12 June 1996.
The idea of archives in the Ottoman State can be traced back to medieval times; millions of documents kept up safe to the present time bear witness to it.

In the Ottoman State which among Near East and Middle East, Balkan and Mediterranean countries had, for centuries, carried out the characteristic of a mighty and powerful state, this idea arised in the early period of its existence. In this respect the Ottoman Archives constitute in the whole Near East, Middle East and Balkan countries an exemplary organization of administrative records established, arranged and kept until our times by a state.

Turkey which inherited from the Ottoman State this rich historical treasure is now one of the few countries possessing qualitatively as well as quantitatively the richest archives on the world.

The archives owned by the Turkish people and state are of primordial and indispensable importance not only for Turkey but also for all the countries of the Near East, Middle East and the Balkans and some of the Mediterranean countries. Consequently our archival wealth has undoubtedly a national as well as international value and importance.

The official dispatches of the Ottoman State and the central government’s archival materials are kept in İstanbul in the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry General Directorate of State Archives. Some of the museums, libraries, offices of the muftis and other official departments possess rich archival materials related to the history of this period.

The Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives keeps the records, registers and rolls of central government organizations such as the Imperial Chancery (Divân-ı Hümâyun), the Ministry of Finance (Bâb-ı Defteri) and the Sublime Porte (Bâb-ı Âsafî or Bâb-ı Âli) and their different departments and clerical offices. Due to the particularities of its archival materials the Ottoman Archives carries the feature of being doubtlessly the state archives of that period.
The main characteristic of the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives is its exceptional value not only for bringing light to the cultural, political and economic histories of the Near East, Middle East, Balkan, Mediterranean, Arabian and North African countries but also, in case of necessity, for serving as a basis for substantiating their rights and being able to be used as legal documents in support of their citizens' claims.

Nowadays researchers from the said countries, in order to establish their own archives, to study, determine and evaluate the questions related to their emergence as independent entities from the sociological point of view, feel the necessity of making researches in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives.

Our paper deals with the importance and value of the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives for the historical sources of the Balkan countries.

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The world "Balkan" means "thickly wooded mountain range" and is a Turkish word. One of the great European Peninsulas, the Balkans stretch along the Central Europe and end at the Mediterranean Sea, and with its strategic position possess a remarkable characteristic. Because of its geographical location it is contiguous to Europe and by the same fact a passageway to other European countries; its nearness to Asia and Africa made it an area of encounter between rival empires and an alluring target for conquests.

Before starting to study the very rich written culture of the Ottoman State which existed on this vast geographical area during five centuries, it would be well to outline the causes that led to the conquest of the Balkans by the Turks, and to review the settlement and administration policies applied there; this, we think, would help understanding the content.

The first time the Ottomans went over to Rumelia followed the conquest of Mudanya (Modrenae) in 1321 to gain booty. The raids made during this period helped getting better knowledge of the area's geography.
In this period while Byzantium was experiencing serious difficulties and the struggle for the succession to the throne was waging, the Serbs under the reign of Stefan Dušan were living the golden age of their history and had started out to occupy Macedonia; thereupon the Ottomans helped Cantacuzene in his struggle for the succession to the throne and saved Salonica on the verge of falling under the occupation of the Serbs. In 1352 the routing of the Serbs who were supporting Iovannes V by the Ottoman supporters of Cantacuzene constitutes a turning point that opened the way to the settling of the Ottomans in Rumelia. In 1354 the Ottomans took hold Gallipoli and settled there.

The Ottoman conquests had been at first considered as ephemeral raids. But the first raids revealed their permanency. The commander of the Turkish armies in Rumelia, Orhan Bey's son Suleiman Pasha, by contributing to bring into the conquered area Turkoman nomads from Anatolia, had thus modified the ethnical structure by Turkifying this area. At the same time, he consolidated the Turkish rule on the said territory by showing great concern for setting up religious, social and scientific organizations and establishments. Important outposts of the early years of conquests had acquired, with the progression of conquests, more central positions and became, in a short space of time, populated and civilised Turkish cities. During the reign of Murat I the state's capital was transferred from Brousse to Andrianople thus emphasising the importance of the conquests made in Rumelia and their continuity. Another aim of settling Turkoman nomads in this region was the protection of the rears of the army while the operations advancing. This policy resulted in the transformation of the Balkans, in the relatively short space of a century and half, into a Turkish homeland.

The crushing defeat of an allied Serbian and Hungarian army, formed in order to stop the Ottoman conquests, at the Battle of "Sırp Sindţiği" (Rout of the Serbs) in 1363 and the discarding of the Serb forces in Macedonia in 1372 at the Battle of Çîrmên opened the way for the conquest of Macedonia. During these conquests all the regions of Kavalla, Drama, Zihre, Serez and Karaferye were captured. Ottoman forces, which swept away all serious obstacles, added the east of the
Vardar river to their territories in a short space of time. In the meanwhile, these forces entered Filibe (Philippopolis/Plovdiv) in 1364 and the first settlement of Turkish population in the Balkans began. From 1372 Bulgaria yielded to the Ottoman rule and between 1373-1389 Sofia was captured. Meanwhile the Ottomans made several expeditions over the Morea. In 1397 Yıldırım Bayezit marched against the Morea, and as a result Morea and Athens accepted the Turkish rule. But Bayezit did not abolish the local Greek administration. In 1446 Morea became a principality subjected to pay capitation to the Ottoman State. In 1458 Mehmet II the Conqueror occupied Athens and put an end to the protectorate regime. In 1460 the Conqueror definitely solved the question of Morea; all the principalities were abolished and whole of the Morea was attached to the Ottoman State.

There had been three cities which were of great importance for the realization of the Ottoman conquests and of an enduring rule over the Balkans: Sofia, far controlling Bulgaria, Niş (Nissa) as the gateway to Serbia, and Manastir as the key that locks the way to Macedonia and Albania. Murat I, firstly, ordered to move into Macedonia. In 1380 İştip was conquered, in 1382 Manastir and then Prilep. Manastir was thought of used as military base for the operations against Albania and North Epirus. For a short time Manastir was lost, but in 1385 Ohrid and Manastir were reconquered. One of the turning points that decisively ascertained the Ottoman presence in the territories of Rumelia was the Battle of Kosova (Kossovo) waged in 1389. Following this victory it became clear that the expulsion of the Ottomans from the Balkans was no longer an easy job. The most important seaport of Macedonia, Salonica, surrendered to the Ottoman rule after a siege of four years, 1383-1387, during the reign of Murat I. Salonica was under the Ottoman Rule during the reign of Bayezit I, but following the Battle of Ankara, it was given back to Byzantium. In 1423 Salonica was given up to the Venetians, but was reconquered by the Turks in 1430 and rebuilt. Those who had left the city were allowed to return and retrieve their properties and goods. About two years after the reconquest, land registration was made. In view of its importance for commerce, Turkish population was forced, by means of exiling, to settle in Salonica. Domains pertaining to monasteries were preserved out and exempted from taxation. About seven months after the reconquest of Salonica, the notabilities of Yanya (Janina) accepted voluntarily the Ottoman rule.
Amannames (records of provision for protection to foreigners or strangers in Muslim land) delivered to the inhabitants of Janina acknowledged that their properties would be preserved and they would have freedom to preserve their faith, to practice their religion and to maintain their own self-rule. But making the Ottoman rule in Albania prevailing was not easy to achieve. Particularly İskender struggled until 1468. The complete conquest of Albania was achieved in 1479. Finally in the mid of the sixteenth century almost the whole Balkan peninsula entered into the Ottoman rule.

The Rumelia region, in the beginning years of the reign of Sultan Murat II, remained for about a year and a half under the rule of Şehzade Mustafa, a pretender to the throne, supported by Byzantium. Following the elimination of Mustafa in 1422, the unity of the Ottoman State was restored and Rumelia subjected to the central government's rule.

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In the early periods of the Ottoman State the country was administratively divided into two provinces as "The Anatolia and the Rumelia Provinces". The Province of Rumelia was coming before the Province of Anatolia in protocol. The first conqueror of Rumelia was Suleiman Pasha who already was "Beylerbeyi" (governor-general) of Rumelia. "Beylerbeylik" (province) was essentially created by Murat I in 1361 and the Sultan's tutor Şahin Bey was appointed as the "Governor General of Rumelia". The first capital of the said province was Andrianople, the chief sanjak of the province of Rumelia which bore the title of "Paşa livası" (Pasha sanjak). The whole of the territories acquired during the conquests made in the XIVth century had been included in this province. In 1541 following the establishment of the Province of Buda the number of provinces increased and the boundaries of the Province of Rumelia was consequently reduced.

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The Rumanian principalities didn't accept easily the Ottoman domination and rule. They, many times, fought against the Ottomans and resorted to various political struggles to hold the Ottomans, in the first stage, far away from the Danube River and endeavoured to stop
the Ottomans off its shores. Notwithstanding their resistance the prin-
cipality of Moldavia was forced to pay capitation and, in 1462 Wallac-
chia positively fell in the sphere of Ottoman influence. In 1538 Sulei-
aman the Magnificent in order to fail the Christian states' alliance
formed under the auspices of Habsburg, started under his command an
expedition against Moldavia which ended under conditions that
definitely led to its attachment to the Ottoman State. The aim of the
Ottoman State was to bring into its sphere of influence the Rumanian
principalities and by doing so to keep the Catholic powers away at a
distance from the Danube River. In fact Rumanian principalities really
played the role of "buffer states" between Catholic powers and the world
of Islam. Under the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent the relations
between Ottomans and Rumanians entered into a new phase. The ruin
of the Kingdom of Hungary and the siding of Poland with the Ottomans
almost entirely isolated the Rumanian principalities in face of the
Turkish forces. The pursuit of a worldwide policy by Suleiman the
Magnificent helped assigning a new role in this policy to Wallachia and
Moldavia. These two principalities lost their statutes as buffer states
and became two important mainstays of the Ottomans' worldwide
policy. Rumanian principalities remained until the XIXth century loyal
to the Ottoman State. But in 1828 Russian armies occupied this region
and, by the Treaty of Andrianople, the autonomy of these principalities
was recognized. In 1859 the unification of the said principalities became
a fait accompli and they entirely separated from the Ottoman State in
1878.

And now let us take a look at the outcome of the Turkish
settlement in the outlined Balkan area. A study carried out on the old
Ottoman registers will reveal that the Ottoman conquest was realized
systematically passing step by step through defined phases. The first
phase shall be an accustoming period to be followed by the eviction of
the reigning monarchs with peaceful means. But the essential parts of
the former state were retained, enrolled and adapted to the
requirements of the Ottoman order. In the subsequent period the
Ottoman regime gradually marks everything by its stamp. But the
former order was never annullled all at once and the Ottoman order was
never applied by force. One can say that in the regions conquered by the
Ottomans, the religious institutions, the social statutes, the
administrative divisions, the taxation, local customs and finally
military classes had been, in their essentials, preserved. The greatest
and the widest innovation boughten by the Ottomans was the timar system (system of fief held in return for military or other service to the state) upon which, in other words, the administrative and military settlement of the Ottomans was founded. The Ottomans maintained the old Greek, Serbian and Albanian military classes in their positions and employed them as Christian timar soldiers within the Ottoman timar branch.

On the other hand, the Ottoman Imperial regime by including laws, usage and customs, taxes, Ottoman codes of laws formerly prevailing in the conquered lands and interesting large masses of the peasantry had applied this policy of compromise to a great extent. In this manner, the Islamic law which includes private law along with the imperial customary law formed as an independant law system base of the centralised bureaucratic administration. All what has been said helps explaining how the Ottoman Empire has been built in the Balkans and how it has survived for five centuries. The Ottoman pax with its administrative and land regimes ruled for centuries over this geographical area.

The policy pursued by the Ottomans vis-à-vis the Orthodox church underlines the Balkanian characteristic of the Empire. Ottomans applied the non Muslims' law (zimmi) with a great largeness of view. Excepting the payment of cizye (head tax imposed on non-Muslims in return for protection, exemption from military service) they were on equal footing with Muslim subjects (the word "zimmi" concerns the monotheist non-Muslim believers in the Books of revelation); protecting their lives and goods is God's commandment and the first and foremost task of a government. Considering the protection of all its subjects by the State without any discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims as the main incombant task was the foremost and decisive factor in the rapid spreading of Ottoman domination.

The Ottoman State while establishing solid and harmonious relations between peoples, religions and creeds and enhancing social justice among the masses had never permitted any discrimination nor made any distinction between the nations under its rule. All these made it the most powerful and universal empire in the world history. Such characteristics bestow upon the Ottoman Empire uniqueness in the history of the world.
The Ottoman State with its political stability, its social justice, its solid structure, its developed and efficacious administration, powerful army and sophisticated military technics, comprehensive judicial system, and activities in culture and architecture occupies an exceptional position on the stage of history.

The law and justice order established in the Balkans and the freedom of religion granted to the peoples on this area facilitated their transition into the Ottoman rule.

* The Ottoman State has been able to have its people live in peace and welfare thanks to its tolerance being one of the most important characteristics of the Turkish-Islam state tradition and not any other state in history has achieved this. It has continued this status for many centuries without applying politically to indoctrination, that is methods and systems for socialization, and without assimilating minorities.

When we study the history of the centuries of Ottoman rule we can realize that their administration had born at every stage of history. Compassionate and just Turkish state traditions never deviated from the path of justice and equity. Turks had been always just, equitable, honest and compassionate towards communities and minorities they swayed and under no circumstances pursued a colonial policy.

Turks in every period of their history, whenever and wherever they went dispensed justice, built civilisations and brought with them civilisation and freedom. Turkish archives are full of living examples that testify it.

* And now let's take a look at the relations between the Ottoman State and Poland and Hungary in consequence of their relations and influence upon the history of the Balkans.

The first stage of the Ottoman-Hungarian relations begins with the passage of the Ottomans to Rumelia. In the commencement the Balkan States strove to check the advance of the Turks. But the inability of the Balkan States, became evident after the first Battle of
Kossovo (1389), compelled the Hungarians to take measures. With these circumstances and the instigation of the Papa the King of Hungary, Zsigmond, mobilized a new crusade which ended by the disaster of Nicopolis in 1396. Battles continued followed by two disasters in 1444 at Varna and in 1448 at Kossovo where the Hungarians suffered heavy losses. At that time the territories of Serbia were within the sphere of Hungary so they couldn't remain indifferent and clashes with Turks were inevitable. Feeling the necessity of taking hold of Serbia which was then ruled by Hungary Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror started in 1456 an expedition which remained unsuccessful. To counter the support given by Hungarians to the Catholics of Bosnia and Serbia the Ottomans took the Orthodoxes under their protection. In view of the Serbian boyars' siding with him Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, to solve definitely the question of Serbia set forward in 1463 to Bosnia. The ensuing battles were fought for the sake of Bosnia which resulted by the occupation of its northern parts by the Hungarians and the southern parts by the Turks.

The relations between the Ottomans and the Hungarians took a hostile turn following the conquest of Belgrade in 1521 during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent and after the Battle of Mohacs (1526), first of all Buda and a part of the Hungarian territories fell into the hands of the Ottomans. During the period from the establishment of the province of Buda till the second Siege of Vienna (1541-1683) the people of this region lived in a complete peace and security and the state took all the required measures to provide for all the people's and the country's needs. However, the appeal for help made by the king of Middle Hungary, Thököly Imre, to the Ottoman State against Austria and the unsuccessful second Siege of Vienna contributed to the passing of this region's peoples under Austrian domination (1699). The Hungarians always considered the Ottoman country as an asylum to seek refuge and when in need to ask for help. As a matter of fact from time to time Hungarian chieftains (beys) struggling to escape Hungarian rule did not hesitate to seek refuge into the Ottoman State. For instance, Thököly Imre ordered to reside in İzmit as it was stipulated by the Treaty of Karlowitz was followed in the commencement of the XVIIIth century by Ferenc Rakoczi II who sought also refuge into the Ottoman
State and took part in the Ottoman ranks in the war against Austria. Similarly in the years 1848-1852 a group of Hungarian refugees headed by Louis Kossuth, Bem and Dembinsky took also refugee in Turkish land. In spite of the menaces uttered by Russia and Austria for their extradition, the Ottoman Government's refusal to surrender them elicited the admiration and the respect of western countries. As a result of the good feelings of the Ottomans towards Hungarians, many Hungarians entered in the service of the Ottomans and even participated in wars on the side of Ottomans and many Hungarians helped in the founding of some institutions. In the beginning of the XVIIIth century Hungarian origin Ibrahim Müteferrika played an important role in the introducing of printing press and office in Turkey and in the second half of the nineteenth century a Hungarian, who assumed the name of Abdullah Efendi, laid the foundation of geology as a branch scientist of instruction in Istanbul.

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In the history of the Balkans there is another country that draws the attention: Poland. The relations between the Turks and Poland named by them as the Pole's province (Vilâyet-i Leh) go back to the dynasty of the Jagellonians. In 1444 during the Battle of Varna, the Jagellonians fought on the side of the Hungarians against the Turks and they had been defeated. In 1485 Bayezit II has occupied Kili and Akkerman with the aim of using them as bases in the campaigns he intended to carry out against Poland. In 1490 Bayezit II concluded his first Treaty with Poland's king; this treaty had been an important step towards the solution of the question of Moldavia. During the Battle of Mohacs, Poland gave its support to the Hungarians but in 1532 a new treaty was concluded between this country and the Ottoman State. This treaty stipulated that the Ottoman State shall never use the territories of the Crimean Khanate and the voivodeship of Moldavia to attack Poland. In return Poland pledged not to side with nor to assist the Ottomans' enemies. Nonetheless, because of questions relating to Crimea, Wallachia and the Cossacks the relations between the Ottomans and Poland frequently suffered from deteriorations. In the wake of the campaign of 1621 by Genç Osman, in 1672 and 1677 two expeditions against Poland were made by Mehmed IV. The first
expedition resulted in the capturing of Kaminiec, the second in the extension of the Ottoman rule over Podolia and Ukraine. The failure underwent in the second Siege of Vienna resulted in the loss of the provinces of Ukraine and Podolia which were given back to Poland according to the Treaty of Karlowitz. Upon the aggression committed by Russia against Poland the Polish nationalists revolted against Russia in 1768 and assembling in the city of Bar asked the Ottoman State for help. The invasion of Poland prompted war declared by the Ottomans against Russia which ended by the defeat and heavy losses of the Ottomans who were forced to sign the Treaty of Kaynarca, one of the history’s most detrimental treaties (1774). In the following periods Poland was partitioned twice and disappeared for a long time from the Europe’s history. During the French and Viennese revolutions Hungarian refugees as well as Polish refugees found asylum in the Ottoman land. Ignoring Russia’s persistent extradition demands and menaces the Ottoman State gave shelter to Hungarian and Polish refugees and refused to deliver them.

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The Balkan Peninsula which stayed as an Ottoman land for five centuries was shaken by deep upheavals in the nineteenth century. With the new ideas awakened by the French Revolution, with especially the nationalistic ideas spreading in the Balkans, breakaway movements began in the Balkans. The Serbs started in 1804 the first movement of independence; but it has not succeeded. The Congress of Vienna granted to Serbia the statute of privileged region under the Ottoman protection and in 1830 the Ottoman State granted to Serbia autonomous principality statute. Following the Treaty of Berlin signed in 1878 Rumania and Montenegro became two independent Balkan countries. In 1815 Greece rebelled against the Ottoman rule but the Ottoman State quelled this rebellion. However, the European States intervened and upon the declaration of war by Russia against the Ottoman State and its ensuing defeat Greece gained its independence in 1829. The independence struggle of the Bulgarians was first directed against the Greek Orthodox Church and in 1876 they revolted against the Ottomans, but this revolt was quelled. Russia intervened and in the ensuing 1877-78 war the Ottomans were severely defeated. The Treaty
of Berlin stipulated that a small Bulgarian Principality attached to the Ottoman State be created, but the Bulgarians in a fait accompli seized the East Rumelia Province in 1885 and in 1908, after repudiating the Ottoman protection gained their independence. Along these developments Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the war of 1878, had been placed in the hands of Austrian administration on condition of maintaining its statute of Ottoman possession, in 1908 it was annexed by Austria. The final blow came with 1912-1913 Balkan wars. Following this date the Ottoman rule in the Balkans ceased but existence of Turks accepted this area as their homeland continued for centuries.

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One can say that half of the hundred and fifty millions of documents kept in the Ottoman Archives are relating to the Balkan countries. We have to bear in mind that this region had been for centuries under the Ottoman State's Administration and therefore a great part of the dispatches and letters written out by the Ottoman bureaucracy had been in concern with the Balkans and consequently it goes without saying that documents dealing with the Balkan countries constitute an important part of the Ottoman Archives. Thanks to these documents one can get very important sources concerning the political, military, economic, social, cultural and administrative history of the Balkan countries.

Most of the document funds kept in the Ottoman Archives contain records which are related directly or indirectly to the Balkan countries. Some examples chosen from these funds can give us a more concrete view on the whole subject.

Some of the most important sources related to the Ottoman State's history can be found in the "Regulation and Prescription Registers" (Akhâm Defterleri), the "Registers of Important Public Affairs" (Mühimme Defterleri) and the "Registers of Land Survey" (Tapu Tahrir Defterleri). These registers contain informations about the state's administration and the history of the regions they deal with; these informations are indispensable for the history of the concerned regions.
Arranged according to the subjects they deal with, the " Registers of Regulations and Prescriptions" were kept to record the commands, codes of laws and decisions and prepared in the name of the Sultan. Thanks to the records kept in the "regulation and prescription registers" we are able to get information about the most different and important subjects concerning the administrative structure, the social and economic situation of the people living in the region and the questions interesting the local people.

The regulation and prescription registers contain records of commands dispatched to the districts of the sanjaks of Bihke, Banaluka, Hersek, Izvornik and Travnik attached to the Province of Bosnia; to the districts of the Morea principality, Sanjaks of Silistria and Niğbolu (Nicopolis) attached to the Province of Özi and Silistria, which included the actual Rumania, Bulgaria, Moldavia and Ukraine; to the Province of Kefe and to the voivodeship of Wallachia and Moldavia; to the districts attached to the province of Rumelia which formerly comprised the area occupied by the actual countries of Rumania, Greece, Macedonia, Albania and Yugoslavia.

As its name indicates, the "important affairs registers" consist of important registers of the state. Firmans and diplomas prepared in the Divân-ı Hümâyun (Sultan's Council) were recorded in these registers. Until 1649 orders on all subjects were recorded in a special register, following this date orders regarding personal affairs began to be recorded in the "complaint registers" and from 1742 complaint registers had been arranged according to the provinces, thus forming the above mentioned "regulation and prescription registers". After the separation of subjects concerning individuals, the records concerning the state's important affairs continued to be recorded in the "important affairs registers". In these registers regarding the period that runs from the XVIth to the XXth centuries one can find countless orders concerning the history of the Balkan countries and communities. Thanks to the important affairs registers we can get a large amount of information about the Ottoman State's central and provincial authorities' administrative and military elements, their manners of working, their legal structures, wars and conquests, state and society relations, local cultures, social life, economic and cultural structure and all kind of problems they faced.
If we should give an example of the records of the important affairs registers we can refer to the order numbered 1767 in the register of important affairs numbered 5 (5 Numarali Mühimme Defteri) kept in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives. This order issued shortly before the death of Suleiman the Magnificent and dispatched to the General Governor of Rumelia on the eve of the Zigetvar Campaign in 1566. It states that while Ottoman Army on its campaign itinerary no one should make any damage to the goods and properties of whoever, nothing should be purchased without paying its price or nobody shall behave ill towards the local population; otherwise, they shall be severely punished. This record we have referred to in the register of important affairs is a proof that the Ottomans, even in the time of war, showed civilian people toleration and equity.

Each document kept in the Ottoman Archives has a great historical value. According to their specifications, the causes of being recorded, to their periods they serve as first hand primordial sources to elucidate the history in all of its aspects; economic, cultural and social past. In the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives among millions of documents there are "Land Survey Registers" which record precious information about the Ottoman central government as well as the surveyed region that cannot be found elsewhere. There had been various reasons for keeping of land survey registers. The first task to be performed following the conquest had been the execution of written land surveys. This was necessary to get knowledge about the newly conquered region and to set up state's administration units to offer public services to the new subjects. Another survey that follows the first one had to be accomplished after such natural and social events as natural calamities, disorders, state of war, emigration and immigration. Apart from these straining causes, the surveys had to be carried out again in every thirty years period.

In the land survey registers taxpayers' names and the surface of the lands in their ownership were defined. Besides, all the taxable assets of the taxpayers and amount of the taxes were also shown. Parallel to the land tilling and planting taxes, persons who are in a position to earn revenues were also inscribed in the said registers. In this manner one can get also information concerning the settlement
units, the male population living thereupon, the size of their lands, their professions, physical disabilities, civil and social statutes, all kinds of products and animal species, grazing lands in the neighborhoods, streams of waters flowing, forests and lakes, underground and soil wealths and the revenues they yield.

The land survey registers offer also the opportunity to get knowledge on various fields as the ethnical structure of the concerned region, the religious situation, its social life and culture, its economic structure, geographical characteristics, climate, history of conquest and war, agricultural and stock breeding activities; in addition to all that has been said, thanks to the records in these registers regarding pious foundations we get acquainted with the education and teaching levels, the construction activities, commerce routs, municipal services, special solidarity and mutual assistance, environment protection works and cultural activities. As we have seen, land survey registers are of vital importance from the standpoint of political, economic, social, cultural, educational, military and agricultural histories and contain information interesting such branches of knowledge as geography, economics and sociology. Prepared in an order and regularity as never seen before these survey registers are, besides their historical value, of great importance for determining and establishing land ownership.

The oldest Land Survey Register goes back to the reign of Murat II (1421-1451) and the total number of the registers that are kept today in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives is 1094; half of these belong to the Balkan countries.

By means of the Survey Register numbered 388, existing in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, written soon after Hungary was conquered and annexed to the Ottoman territories and became a province, we can get very detailed information about the social, economic, religious and agricultural structure of this region in the mid of the sixteenth century.

In the Kanunnâme (code of law) of Buda, taking place in the first pages of the register, the taxes levied on the people of the province's center, Buda, and of the sanjaks of Estergon, Hatvan and Novigrad attached to it were numerated one by one and fixing the amount each taxpayer shall pay.
Also thanks to the information provided by the said register we can get detailed information on the structure of population, religious structure, professional groups, agriculture and stock breeding in the Province of Buda.

When we consider that such informations do also exist in all land survey registers we can realize the importance of these registers for historical sources of the Balkan countries.

Outside the land survey registers there are "Registers of Awarded Fiefs" (Timar Tevcih Defterleri) which contain important local informations recorded concerning a given piece of land awarded in return for a certain revenue that entails the fullfilling of a service or the performing of a task to a person. The feudatory is obliged to manage the finance of his fief and at the same time to protect the peasants living on the land, to prepare an adequate environment for them and to develop farming activities.

The letters sent by the Ottoman Sultan to foreign states' monarchs as well to the king of Transylvania and the voivodies of Wallachia and Moldavia are called "nâme-i hümâyûn" (autograph letters of the Sultan). These letters and the answers received were recorded in the "registers of Sultan's autograph letters". Among these registers, registers of the XVII-XIXth centuries contain information which supply us with ideas on the important political events of the region.

Another two important document funds concerning the above mentioned region are the "Appointment Registers" as "Tahvil" and "Ruus" registers. The first contains the records of the nomination of viziers, general governors, governors of sanjaks and the awarding of large and ordinary fiefs. All other state functionaries, receiving their salaries from the state's treasury or pious foundation's pay offices had their formalities inscribed in the "Ruus Registers". The records kept in the offices where these two registers existed furnish us with precious information about the Ottoman State's administrative structure.

Another source of records that might interest the Balkan countries is the "Registers of Disposable Revenues" (Hadariye Defterleri). It comprises the extra-canonical taxes that serve to cover
budget deficits. These revenues were assessed and collected in two manners according to periods of peace or war, and commands sent to governors of provinces and sanjaks to collect the said taxes, were inscribed in those registers. Commands sent to Croatia, Rumania, Bulgaria and other Balkan countries were entered in the "Registers of Disposable Revenues".

Another important fund for political history consists of the documents of the "secretarial department of grand vizier" (Divân-ı Hümâyûn Âmedî Kalemi). This fund contains the letters to be dispatched by the Grand Vizier to foreign states, texts of peace treaties, sovereign charters of engagements, protocols of interviews, writings sent to and received from embassies and consulates. Some of these registers are named "Foreign States Registers", kept in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, pertaining to the Balkan countries and are a source of great importance to the political history of the said countries. The foreign states registers comprise the period between the XVI-XXth centuries.

There are in the Foreign States Registers many interesting copies of documents. In the register of Dubrovnik numbered 14/2 kept in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives there is a charter of engagement addressed, following the conquest of Bosnia by the Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, to the priests of Bosnia which states that no one shall interfere with the priests and the churches, nor attack them or do them harms, otherwise those who commit such acts shall be punished and the priests who being frightened fled can freely return; all these attested by an oath taken in the name of God and his Prophet.

All these corroborate the fact that in the settled regions ruled and administrated by the Ottomans, intervention in the faith, warship of any person was impossible and that everyone enjoyed living in freedom of settlement, in liberty of conscience and opinion.

Another important documentary source for the Balkan countries are the "Capitation Registers" (Cizye Defferleri). Capitation is a kind of tax assessed on the non-Muslims in return for the protection of their lives and goods by the state and their exemption from military service. Only male persons were subjected to this tax. In these registers
generally the names of the province, sanjak, district, sub-district, village, farm estate and quarters were stated; inhabitants, guests, transit passangers, countrymen commerchants, their features, ages and rates of capitation, amount of the collected taxes were written; below the taxpayers' names amount of the tax was given and sealed by authorities.

Part of the registers, kept in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives which contain the records of the taxes on profits assessed on the annual revenues of commerchants, traders and artisans are related to the Balkan countries. The basis of the profit tax is the excise tax imposed in 1826 during the reign of Sultan Mahmut II. The registers of profit taxes (Temettu Defteleri) kept in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives pertain to the mid of the XIXth century.

The profit tax registers consist of records relating to Muslim and non-Muslim people living in all settled units like cities, districts, towns, sub-distriicts, villages, farms, small farms and to their fields, vineyards, gardens, rented shops, houses, coffee shops and similar immovables, all species of animals raised and commodities produced by them.

These registers also state the qualities of lands owned by individuals, as dry or irrigated fields, uncultivated or already tilled, the characteristics of their gardens and vineyards; highland fields, pastures plant for grazing and fodder, cattles like cows, oxes, young bulls, heifers, calves, water buffaloes, horses, mules, donkeys, mares, sheeps, goats, Angora goats, pigs; are recorded as were also their species, numbers, whether they are milk yielding or infertile values, measures and weight of grains and pulses and products like wheat barley, oat, cotton, grapes, bean, corn, bean, rye, broad bean are also put into registers. Besides all these items, rented house, shop, coffee shop, etc. were registered one by one in the said registers.

All these informations reflecting the socio-economic and cultural situation of the settled regions are of great importance. Because, in addition to the assets of the individuals their revenue yielding professions were recorded in the registers. One can also find in the profit-tax registers, the measures and weights of the productions and concerned persons' physical characteristics.
Another important source of documents are the papers of the "Rumelia Inspectorate" which reflects the political atmosphere of the period between the end of the XIXth century and the beginning of the XXth century. These records contain very precious and interesting information about the general situation, the movements of independence and the activities of the comitadjies in the Balkan regions during the period before the Balkan Wars and the First World War.

Rumelia Inspectorate papers comprise the records which are related to the provinces of Manastir, Salonica, Kossovo, Janina, Andrianople, Iskodra and the sanjaks, districts, sub-districts and villages attached to them. The Rumelia Inspectorate contain other writings than those pertaining to Bulgarian, Rumanian, Serbian and Albanian comitadjies' activities, gendarmery and police organizations', consulates', and the patriarchate's activities which are all related to important matters, these are official activities concerning other administrative, financial economic, political, agricultural and judicial affairs. If there had been matters that exceeded its authorities the Rumelia Inspectorate acted on its own in conformity with the commands and orders of the Sultan and Grand Visier thus proving it to be a good organizer to control and expedite the affairs.

Rumelia Inspectorate papers generally deal with such matters as appointments and promotions, solary requests, illegal activities of comitadjies, taxes and tax-farming staffs, conflicts of creeds between Greeks and Bulgarians, judicial and legal incidents, administration's corruption, curtailing police and gendarmery staffs, regional building and construction activities, plots of Greek bishops and Bulgarian doscalls, etc. This fund reflects the administrative, social, financial, ethnographic and demographic situation of the region.

Naturally these are not the sole documents, kept in the Ottoman Archives, related to the Balkan countries. In many funds we can find documents of primordial importance as historical sources to the said countries. Imperial Firmans; Ali Emiri, İbnülemin and Muallim Cevdet documents, funds which are not classified according to regional criteria, can only be identified through searching method. In the same manner, among classified Yıldız documents, Imperial Wills, the Sublime Porte's
Registry Office, Council of Ministers and Ministry of the Interior's clerical office's countless documents related to the Balkan region can be found.

The Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives is an unequaled treasure for the history of the Balkans. One can say that there is no possibility of writing the history of the Balkans and the Balkan countries while ignoring the documents kept in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives.

Taking into consideration that the documents kept in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives are of vital importance both for the history of this region and because they bear witness to the Turkish domination and rule that lasted there for centuries, they are preserved with the greatest care and offered for the access by native and foreign scholars and scientists, researchers, and future generations.
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