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SKOPJE MADRASAS IN THE OTTOMAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (XV-XVI CENTURY)

Abstract: With the arrival of the Ottomans in the second half of the 14th century on the territory of today's Macedonian state, mektebs and madrasas were the most essential elements of the entire educational system in that period. The mektebs functioned as Ottoman primary schools connected to mosques and masjids where literacy courses were organized for Muslim children, spread across neighborhoods and populated areas with a larger Muslim population. With the emergence of waqf properties as a result of the consolidation of power through the formation of stable economic and trade relations, the functioning of madrasas, i.e., Ottoman high schools for the Muslim population, began.

The purpose of this paper is to present the educational structure of madrasas in Skopje in the XV-XVI century. Based on the archival documents, I will give a clear picture of the education in the madrasas, the founders of the most famous madrasas in Skopje, the curriculum and the studied subjects, as well as the fund of books in the madrasa's libraries, for the teaching and administrative staff and students, as well as for the buildings themselves as architecturally independent buildings or as part of waqf complexes.

Keywords: Education, Mekteb, Madrasa, Waqf, Library

Introduction

Today's Macedonian state was considered as one of the most important regions in the Balkan lands of the Ottoman state, and in every region, especially in Skopje, as well as in Bitola, due to their strategic position, many religious, educational, social and economic institutions were built.

Evliya Celebi is one of the best sources that describes Skopje in a best way. According to his records, in the city there were 70 neighborhoods, 10060 houses, 45 mosques in which Friday worship was conducted, 120 masjids and mosques, madrasa, whose number is not mentioned only two of them are named, 9 darulkura, 70 mektebs-schools, 20 dervish lodges, 110 fountains, number of hamams-baths not specified, 7 karvansaray, 1 bedesten, 14-eyed bridge. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 246-247)

Madrasas, which were especially established to train officials/administrators, such as *kadi*, known as judges that in accordance of Islamic law were running on judicial cases and were the main part of the central administration possessing a certain degree of autonomy, (Jennings, 1979), *müderris* known as professor or religious scholar, (Boğaç, 2003: 26), and *müftü*, an expert who possesses a wide knowledge of Islamic legal theory and providing legal advice or nonbinding legal opinion-fetwa to Muslim population, (Swartz, 2009), were responsible in ensuring the spread of Ottoman justice and tolerance in Balkans. (Belge, 2005: 215)

Madrasas are foundation complexes constituting a complete education and training institution with dormitories to accommodate students, a library for their study, research and reading books, bathrooms for cleaning, a kitchen to provide food, etc. (Akyüz, 2010: 76)

The construction of a mosque and alongside it a madrasa had become a tradition in places conquered by the Ottomans, in the integral part of their policy of conquest. This tradition was in order to provide the needed religious, scientific and educational services for society and the state and train the administrative staff for the state administration. This tradition ensured a strong central administration in the state.

It is important to mention that the inclusion of madrasas as an official institution in the state system in the Ottoman state was during the period of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror.

Method of Research

The method of content analysis will be used to accurately study and find the key answers to our research aim. The contents of archival documents as well as literature up to now published on the subject will be analyzed. So, by analyzing the qualitative characteristics of the contents, we will describe for a certain period of time in a certain place, with precision and objectivity, exactly how it was the educational system in Skopje Madrasas during the Ottoman Ruling. Moreover, this research will be presented in a narrative form through the processing and analysis of archival documents and historical literature poured into a form of a scientific paper.

Results and Discussion

Education in the Ottoman State has been carried out in official institutions such as madrasas that were considered to be one of the foremost sources for science in general, and in unofficial institutions where informal education was conducted such as in mosques, libraries, lodges of wealthy people and state administrators as well as in tekke and zawiya. (İhsanoğlu, 1998: II:230)

The creation of the educational network of schools and madrasas in Ottoman Macedonia is closely related to the waqf institutions. Many madrasas were built in different cities of Macedonia throughout the Ottoman history. In the early Ottoman period, Isa Bey was one of the greatest Balkan feudal lords with vast movable and immovable property. From Isa Bey's waqfname we can understand how great was his wealth. Not only him but here I would like to mention as well as Ishak Bey and Mustafa Pasa people who founded madrasas following their names.

The madrasa architecture mainly could be within the scope of a complex building or built as independent buildings, but each having the basic structural elements dersane called as classrooms, student cells or rooms and masjids. Depending on financial resources they could also include garden, library, tomb, kitchen, pool, fountain, toilet, stairs, etc. in their structure. (Akgündüz, 1997:476)

Müderris and *muid* known as assistant, were the teaching members of madrasa and students were called as *talebe* who after graduation would become a clerk in a large mansion, kadi or muderris. (Imber, 2002:229) So that, after completion of the basic education the maktebs, students who wished to specialize in a particular field of study would follow muderrises well known in that area and get lessons and obtain a license, *icazetname*, from them. It was the muderris who was the fundamental element in the license, a document that would indicate the nature of the study completed and the pedigree of the muderrises-professors issuing the degree, though not in the name of the madrasa where the education had taken place. (Imber, 2002: 228), (Baltacı, 1976: 34), (İhsanoğlu, 1998: II:233) In other words, in the madrasa it was the professor which was in the forefront. So that, if the daily wage of the muderris was twenty – twenty five *akçe*, the madrasa was of a degree of *twenties*, the daily wage of thirty – thirty five *akçe* it was of a degree of

thirties, with daily wage of forty akçe, it was a degree of *forties*, daily wage of fifty akçe was a madrasa of a degree of *fifties* and madrasas in which mostly the Ottoman Sultans, prince mothers and princes as well as where sultan's daughters were educated, the daily wage of the muderris was of sixty akçe, so that this madrasa was with a degree of *sixties*, and it was the highest level of education in ottoman madrasa. (Uzunçarşılı, 1965: 11) The degree of the madrasa was determining the curricula of the madrasa. The courses taught in madrasahs could be divided into three groups. Juziyat, these are the lessons of mathematics, engineering, social subjects, the second group of ilm-i aliye, these are rhetoric, logic and Arabic sarf and nahwi, and the third group consists of tafsir, hadith and fiqh. (Parmaksızoğlu, 1966: 10) Large number of students were educated in this way in the madrasahs and under the instruction of famous scholars, came to constitute a new community of educated people in the Islamic world.

In the 15th century, four lessons a day, and in the 16th century, five lessons were taught in Ottoman madrasahs. In other sources, it is stated that the number of lessons per day could differ, and there were some with one or two lessons a day, as well as some others who do ten lessons. (Bilge, 1984: 22) Class divisions were made according to the books and courses taught, and the professors were assigned to the courses according to their grades. (Yaltkaya, 1940: 463-467)

There were 12 active madrasahs in Skopje in 15th to 16th century recorded in archival documents and historical resources we have reached up to now. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 291) In this paper some will be only mentioned by their names and their archival documents where they appear, and some of them will only be shortly mentioned with some specific information. Whereas the main attention will be given to Isa Bey Madrasa which has been the only one in Skopje that continues its activities with the same name until today.

Meddah Baba Madrasa: There is no exact information about when Meddah Baba Madrasa for sure was built but it could be considered that it was built during the ruling of Pasha Yiğit, the conqueror of Skopje, so that this madrasa is accepted to be one of the oldest madrasahs in Skopje. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 247)

Important muderris names in the State archival documents who lectured in later period were Ataullah Efendi Kurtish, (Aruçi, 2002: 191), and Fettah Efendi Rauf. (Aruçi, 1995: 483-484)

Ishak Bey Madrasa: in vaqfnama which dates to 848/1444-45 it was stated that the Ishak Bey mosque was built in 842/1438-39, so was the madrasa as well. (Özer, 2006: 292) However, there is no trace of the madrasa today. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 258) Very famous professors i.e muderrises graduated from here.

Sultan Murad Madrasa: This madrasa was built when the mosque was built in the first half of the XV. Century. The madrasah was made of stone bricks. It is the only madrasah whose ruins have survived until today. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 258), (Kumbaracı-Bogoyeviç, 2008: 52)

Mustafa Pasha Madrasa: was built by Mustafa Pasha, who had a mosque, imarethane, madrasa and tomb in Skopje. (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 263) The madrasa was built the same year when the mosque was also built. In Evliya Celebi's travel book this madrasa is mentioned as one of the most famous ones in Skopje. (Çelebi, 1315: V: 556)

Not only these but there are also other madrasahs to be mentioned as well, such as Atiye Binti Yaşar Bey Madrasa, (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 290) Hacı Hasan İbn-i Ali Madrasa, (Ayverdi, 1981: c.III/3: 290), Hacı İsmail Ağa Madrasa, (Özer, 2006: 291), Burmalı Madrasa (Süreyya, 1996: IV: 109), (Çelebi, 1315: V: 556), but I would like to give the main attention on Isa Bey Medresa.

Isa Bey Madrasa is one of the most famous places in Skopje mentioned in Evliya Çelebi's Travel Book. A record of the existence of the Isa-bey's medres was found in 1469 in the certification of his waqf i.e *vakifname*. It states that Isa-bey built a medresa with ten departments, and a tekke near it. His large estate was completed by: the Chifte Hammam and the shops near it; the nineteen shops in front of the hammam connected to his father Ishak-bey's bedesten, and the Kaplan Han with the shops around it, all these were built in order to support the madrasa.

Other important part of the educational system of madrasas were the libraries for which historians say that those libraries were also the first educational institutions in the Balkans. In every larger mosque in Macedonia, there was a library as well. The oldest waqf documents from the XV century, written about by Hasan Kalesi and Gliša Elezović, contain valuable information about the manuscripts that were kept in several libraries. (Kaleši, 1972), (Kaleši, 1962: No.4: 274), (Elezović, 1940).

Isa Bey Library was part of the madrasa founded by Isa-bey, after whom it is named. Same as the madrasa this library dates back to the 15th century and it is one of the libraries for which there are several texts so far written. More importantly to mention is about the book heritage which is an inseparable part of the religious life of Muslims, because until recent times, books or, more precisely, manuscripts were kept in special rooms that were located in the complex of mosques, tekke and madrasahs, the number of which in Macedonia, and especially in Skopje, is very high. (Kaleši, 1972: 196).

In the Isa Bey library, there was also an employee, more precisely, a librarian whose task was to take care of the books and he received two *akçe* a day. Isa Bey's vakifname is also the first document in the Balkans that mentions a librarian. (Elezovic, 1940: 140).

Moreover, Isa-bey gave all his books. It was a rich fund of manuscripts on various subjects. The book fund consisted of A total of 325 volumes and 218 books, making this medrese one of the richest libraries on the Balkans. Most of these books had religious nature, however some of the books were about astronomy, medicine, philosophy, mathematics, and so on.

The Isa Bey Medresa has, since its establishment until today, stopped working several times, because the building of the Medresa has been ruined in the war and in other accidents. The first time when it stopped working was in 1689, when the Austrian general Piccolomini, (Инбаши, 2020: 88) with his army burned Skopje. Ruins of the walls of its building, after this destruction, were saved until the beginning of the Second World War. In 1932, on the initiative of the religious leaders and intellectuals from that period, Isa Beg Medresa was restored, so that in 1936 conditions were created to begin with regular work of the madrasa as well as its library. (ДАРСМ 01.0613.0102.0059/0599-0602). The opening of the madrasah and the library was signed by then Naib of the Islamic Religious Community, and archived on September 2, 1936, representatives of the madjlis were invited to attend the opening ceremony of these two inseparable institutions. (ДАРСМ 01.0613.0102.0008/195).

After the Second World War it stopped the activities again for a longer period, until 1979, when the Islamic Religious Community made a decision for it to be built again, so that in the academic year 1984/85 the educational process began. Now, on the basis of the needs, the Medresa is enlarged with several additional classes for girls that are located in Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar as well as a class for boys in Stip.

It should be emphasized that the Medresa Isa bey in Skopje celebrates this year 553rd anniversary from its existence, and that this institution is one of the oldest on the Balkans Peninsula.

Conclusion

The educational organization of madrasas within the borders of the Ottoman State during the 15th-16th century was at a very good level. There were more than eighty madrasas founded in the territory of today's Macedonian state. The system of waqfs especially demonstrates the seriousness of these educational organizations since it was providing a free education, accommodation, daily wages for Muslim children and was covering the expanses of madrasas. The degree of the madrasa was determining the curricula of the madrasa which was related to how much daily wage the muderris was getting. So that it was the muderris, i.e., professor in the forefront and in the certificate, it was indicated the nature of the study completed and the pedigree of the

muderrises-professors issuing the degree. Very important scholars were giving education in these madrasas which later were raising educated people able to serve as administrators at the highest level of state administration. Other important part of the educational system of madrasas were the libraries that are considered to be the first educational institutions in the Balkans. In every larger mosque in Macedonia, there was a library. Libraries were also present as a branch of most of the madrasas so that they were actively functioning to serve mainly to students and professors.

The main focus in this paper was given to Isa Bey Madrasa since this has been the only one in Skopje that continues its activities with the same name until today same as other two madrasas in Balkans, Gazi Husrev Beg Madrasa in Sarajevo and Alauddin Madrasa in Pristina.

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