

Importance of the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Regarding the Historical Sources of Romania

YUSUF SARINAY

General Director of State Archives of
the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey

Cultural values have a great importance for being a nation and for making it continuous. Archival documents which we possess form an important part of cultural values. Records that are preserved in archives are the documents which are accumulated, taken over, processed or kept during the execution of procedures by states, institutions or organizations. Archives help us, to a great extent, to learn nations' identities, features and rights. Archives are historical treasures which rely upon strong bases and bind people to the present and future from the past. Archives protect documents against memory loss; make documents to gain the quality of archival material and make us to benefit from them.

Consequently, archives protect and document states' and individuals' rights and international relations. They are used to enlighten and determine historical and cultural matters. Meanwhile, archives become sources for scientific researches by bringing out the usages, customs, social structure and organizations of the period and the relations among them.

During a period of approximately seven hundred years, Ottoman Empire had relations with many countries and nations on a wide geographical area of millions square kilometers and had ruled over some of these countries. After the Ottoman Empire had become a thing of the past, approximately thirty states had been founded on the Balkans and in the Middle and Near East. Thereof, Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives constitute a source for the Turkish nation's history of last six hundred years, culture and civilization, folklore and art, social and economic position, architectural and demographic structure. Ottoman archives, which rely upon the documents of the Grand Vizier's Office, carry the feature of being a source for the national history of almost thirty states with which the Ottoman Empire had relations once.

"Hazine-i Evrak", that means the "Treasury of Records", consists of various registers, which had accumulated as a result of procedures during the historical course of time of the Ottoman Empire, such as Tapu Tahrir Defterleri (Land Survey Registers), Mühimme Defterleri (Important Affairs Registers), Hatt-ı Hümayunlar (Imperial Decrees), Name-i Hümayunlar (Autograph Letters of Sultan), Iradeler (Decrees) and Vakfiyeler (Documents of Pious Foundations). Also it contains documents and registers pertaining to various departments, directorates, ministries and inspectorships of the state. As the name given by the

Ottomans implies, "Hazine-i Evrak" is a real treasury for the Archives in Turkey and in the world. Today 75 millions documents of Ottoman archival heritage, comprising more than 100 millions documents, are offered for the service of native and foreign scholars and researchers. Among the funds that are open for research, thousands of documents shed light on the history of Romania which was one of the countries taking place on the wide geographical area under the Ottoman rule once.

Historical Background of Relations Between the Ottoman Empire and Romania

Ottomans' relations with Romania which was the only Latin community on the Balkans and in Eastern Europe, started with the invasion of Dobruca by Mehmed I. During the reigns of Murad II and Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, campaigns were made on Moldavia and Wallachia. During the reign of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror, Romania stayed under the Ottoman rule. Moldavia and Wallachia principalities were united with the Treaty of Paris in 1856. Romanians had stayed under the Ottoman rule during four hundred years and declared their independence in 1877. Ottoman State accepted the independence of Romanians with the treaties of Aya Stefanos and Berlin.

Ottoman Empire, in accordance with the Balkan policy of the state, gave great importance to this region and saw it as a gateway to Europe. This region connects Europe with Asia through Northern Africa, Middle East and Anatolia. In other words, as the Balkan Peninsula takes place on the border line between Asia and Europe, this region became a natural passageway for invasions and a way to spread.

Documents Concerning Romania in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives Mühimme Defterleri (Important Affairs Registers)

Important Affairs Registers are the register types kept in the Sultan's Council to record Ottoman Empire's important decisions relating to administrative, political, military, religious, economic and social affairs. Thanks to the information in this fond, which contains 266 registers pertaining to the period between 1553 and 1905, it is possible to get knowledge about the structure of central and provincial organization of the Ottoman Empire; military, legal and administrative structure of the state; and moral, social, economic and religious situation of society. These registers include many decrees concerning Romania.

For example, we can mention the decree 402 in Mühimme Defteri numbered 3. This decree dates back to 1558 and pertains to the period of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. In the decree sent to Petri, who had succeeded to the throne upon his father Voivode Mircea's death, below issues were given:

- Justice will be implemented entirely and continuously in the state services.
- Public's security will be ensured completely and necessary measures

will be taken against possible harm by enemies and by people with bad intentions.

The decrees numbered 112 and 1329, dated 1559 and 1560 in the above mentioned register have the same content, as well.

Hatt-ı Hümayun Tasnifi (Imperial Decree Catalogue)

Hatt-ı Hümayun usually means "hand writing of sultan" and is used in the meaning of written order of sultan. Either the important matters had been written by the grand vizier as an abstract and presented to the sultan, or the sultan had ordered grand vizier to write a decree. Until the period of Murad III, sultans had given written orders seldomly only for restricted affairs. After Sultan Murad III, number of imperial decrees increased.

Imperial decree catalogue contains many documents which will enlighten the history of Romania. For example:

The document numbered 12550-C and dated 1797 is a tax lawbook prepared to protect Romanian people against any kind of loss. This lawbook includes the following issues:

- Collecting taxes within the framework of laws by the state officials,
- Paying the current value fees of labor and timber collected from people for the repair of public buildings,
- Paying the entire fees of sheep collected for state,
- Voivodes who have misused their mission by entertaining themselves excessively will be dismissed and punished as well.
- Voivodes will not be punished unless they are guilty.
- Candidates for voivode will sell their excessive real estates in order to prevent gossips.

Apart from the above mentioned ones, there are also some documents about following issues:

- Upon the request of Moldavian and Wallachian boyars which came to Istanbul, voivodes will be appointed from local boyars¹.
- Letter sent by Wallachian Voivode Grigori Ghika to the Grand Vizier concerning that he started his mission².
- Letter of gratitude by metropolitans, priests, boyars and public for the Sultan's order concerning appointment of Wallachian Voivode from local

¹ Hat, 45666, A. D. 1820.

² Hat, 45879, A. D. 1822.

boyars³.

Irade Tasnifleri (Decree Catalogues)

Irade means the order of sultan. Before 1832, some issues, for which Sultan's opinion is required, used to be presented to sultan as an abstract, called telhis.

After 1832, these abstracts used to be written as an address o private head clerk of sultan, called Serkatib-i Şehriyari. Head clerk used to read them to sultan. After sultan gave his opinion verbally, this opinion used to be written under abstract in italics by head clerk as an address o grand vizier. This is called irade that means decree.

Irade catalogue includes thousands of documents relating o Romania. For instance:

- Building a station house in Tolcu town as the ship crew coming o Tolcu infringe upon security and peace of public⁴.
- Uniting Tolcu, Isakçi, Macin and Babadağı towns to adopt a kaimakamlik⁵.
- Appointing a teacher for secondary school built in Köstence town⁶.
- Completing the procedures for government house and prison needed in Köstence⁷.
- Appointing a teacher for secondary school built in Mecidiye town⁸.

Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları (Minutes of the Cabinet)

Meclis-i Vükela is the name of the council which was consisting of ministers and sheikhulislam under the presidency of grand vizier and was deciding on important affairs concerning state's internal and external policy. It is equal to today's "Council of Ministers". Decisions taken in this council were called mazbata that is minutes. These minutes comprise period between 1885-1918.

One of the most significant documents in this fond is the document numbered 96-19. According to the decision dated 1 October 1898, permission was given to the Roman ambassador to carry out research in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives on the documents, dating back o 1717-1866, concerning

³ Hat 45530-A, A. D. 1822.

⁴ İ.MVL, 4485, December 1849.

⁵ İ.MVL, 5841, December 1850.

⁶ İ.DH, 34950, September 1863.

⁷ İ.MVL, 21851, February 1863.

⁸ İ.MVL, 23432, November 1864.

Wallachia-Moldavia.

Name-i Hümayun Defterleri (Registers of Sultan's Autograph Letters)

Copies of the letters dispatched by sultan to Muslim and Christian emperors and to specially privileged subjects of the Ottoman Empire such as Mecca Sherif, Crimean Khan, Transylvanian King, Voivodies of Wallachia and Moldavia, Khans of Georgia and Daghestan and the replies to these letters had been recorded in registers called "Name-i Hümayun". When Ottoman sultans had succeeded to the throne, letters used to be sent by an envoy to friend and neighboring countries in order to inform the sovereignty of new sultan. Also, a letter with new sultan's imperial monogram used to be given to the ambassadors of the countries to which no ambassador had been appointed from the Ottoman Empire. This letter used to be sent to the emperor by the related ambassador.

Name-i Hümayun registers include many records concerning Romania. Thanks to these records we can follow up the historical development of Romania on administrative, financial and military affairs. For example, the document dated 1858, taking place in line 289 of the register numbered 12 is a constitution of Wallachia-Moldavia. Important provisions of this constitution are as follows:

- Government will be consisted of a voivoide, a senate and a selected council.
- Legal power will be executed by voivoide, senate and council in common.
- Head metropolitan is the leader of senate.
- Head of the selected council will be elected by the voivoide from the members of council each year.

In the line 290 of the same register, essentials to be applied for elections were given. Important articles are as follows:

- Two graded elections will be made.
- Number of deputies will be determined according to the importance and size of cities and towns.
- Deputy candidates must have real estates; must be authorized officials and must be younger than 30.

As another example, we can give the translation of the minutes in line 1 of the register numbered 13. These minutes date back to 1867 and determine the shape and color of flags on trade ships. Accordingly, flags will be striped and transparent at the top, yellow in the middle and red at the end.

Temettuat Defterleri (Registers of Profit Tax)

Information concerning public's personal properties, lands, real estates,

animals, etc., by examining settlement areas such as districts and villages had been recorded in registers called "temettuat defterleri". When we examine these registers we can learn social, economic and demographic features of a city in detail.

During the cataloging process of these registers, totally 17747 in number, administrative divisions of the period was taken into consideration. Documents pertaining to Babadag, Mangalia, Măcin and Constanța, cities of Romania take place in these registers. For example: we can give the registers dated 1845 and numbered 11881 and 11882.

The register numbered 11881, consisting of 476 pages, contains information on Christian community in Babadag. As means of subsistence we can see fishery, blacksmith's profession and tailoring apart from agriculture and animal-breeding.

The register numbered 11882, consisting of 152 pages, is related to Muslim community of the same district. Means of subsistence are agriculture, animal-breeding, tobacconist's business, business of grocer, owning of a public bath, coffee trade and service, millstone quarry, profession of a driver, making and selling candles, trade of a tanner, profession of a barber, Quran writing, cooper, trade of a herbalist. In this register we can fix all wards in the center of Babadag. Names of these wards are: Sadi Çelebi, Ahmed Ağa, Çeşme, Kara Nasuh, Ali Fakih, Kadı Mescidi, Çizmeçi, Çiteli, Dere, Tekke, Saraç, Yerkesek, Kavak, Sofular, Varoş.

Dahiliye Nezareti Evraki (Documents of Ministry of Internal Affairs)

Dahiliye Nezareti was the institution in which the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire were executed. Since 1837, the establishment date, it worked in sub-branches and attached organizations. This fond includes many documents concerning Romania.

Document group numbered 46-2/19 of the part titled Private Secretariat of the mentioned fond includes the report prepared by civil service inspector Kemal Bey about Dobruca. This report, consisting of 20 pages, had been prepared upon examinations carried out in Dobruca in 1918. One can have detailed information about the following features of the region:

- Ethnic structure of the region: Turkish and Muslim population was in majority in 1878 in Dobruca region, but in 1918 they were in minority. Population research of 1918 shows that the region composed of 50% Romanians, 25% Turkish-Tatar, 18% Bulgarians and 7% various.

- Detailed information on social and economic situation, customs and usages of Turks who had lived in the region can be found as well. Also there are information about agricultural condition of the region, education, public security and tax types.

Muahedeler Tasnifi (Treaties Catalogue)

This fond includes original copies of the treaties signed between the Ottoman Empire and various countries during the years 1783-1921. The document numbered 178 is the copy of trade treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Romania signed on August 12, 1901. This copy had been ratified by Romanian King Carol I and consists of 7 articles.

Conclusion

In the Turkish archives there is a great amount of documents shedding light on the historical course of time of the relations between Turkey and Romania. The above mentioned examples comprise a very small part of the documents we possess. If we consider that there are hundreds of fonds and sub-branches of the fonds as well, then the size of the archival treasure can be estimated.

The General Directorate of Turkish State Archives implemented an automation project in order to share this archival treasure with scholars and to fulfill its historical responsibility. As a result of this project, approximately five millions documents were transferred into internet environment. People can carry out research, free of charge, on our web-site in the address: www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr.

I conclude the presentation by expressing my sincere wish for the development of continuing relations between the two states within the framework of archives.