The Records of Catholic Churches of Shkoder's Province (Albania), An Important Archival Source For The Historical Studies During The XII – XX Centuries

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İşkodra Eyaleti (Arnavutluk) Katolik Kiliseleri Kayıtları*

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Near East Historical Review

10/1, January - Ocak 2020

e-ISSN: 2717-6363 (Online)

www.nehrreview.com

Article Type - Makale Türü : Research Article – Araştırma Makalesi

Received Date - Geliş Tarihi : 18.10.2019

Accepted Date - Kabul Tarihi : 14.01.2020

Pages - Sayfa : 25-32

: <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/nehrreview.40236>

Citation - Atıf:

Kujtim Nuro, “The Records of Catholic Churches of Shkoder's Province (Albania), An Important Archival Source For The Historical Studies During The XII – XX Centuries”, *Near East Historical Review*, 10/1, January 2020, pp. 25-32.

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Öz

Arnavutluk Devlet Merkez Arşivi'ndeki (Tiran) İşkodra vilayetinin Katolik kiliselerinin kayıtları, farklı alanların araştırmaları için önemli bir arşiv kaynağıdır. Bu arşivler, Arnavut topraklarının tarihi için, özellikle Osmanlı Devletinin hakimiyeti altında oldukları XII-XX. yüzyıllar için, büyük bir tarihi ve kültürel değeri içermektedir. Bu dönemde İşkodra, Kuzey Arnavutluk'taki Katolik kiliselerinin bölgesel bir arşiv merkeziydi. İncelenen İşkodra Başpiskoposluğunun kayıtları, Papalık arşivinin kurallarına ve kısmen Papa'nın doğrudan emirlerine göre oluşturulmuştur. Orijinal belgeleri 1638 yılında başlar ve cami, kilise ve tekke gibi din kurumlarının komünist rejimin diktatörlüğünde kapatıldığı 1967 yılına kadar devam eder. 5417 klasörden oluşan bu arşiv aynı zamanda, papazların periyodik olarak yabancı ülkelerdeki arşiv ve kütüphanelerde yaptıkları araştırmalarda keşfettikleri ve topladıkları XII.yüzyıldan kalma Arnavutluk tarihi ile ilgili belgelerin çok sayıda kopyasını da içermektedir. Bu kayıtların dili Arnavutça, Fransızca, Almanca, İtalyanca, Latince ve Türkçe'dir. Büyük bir tarihsel değer içermelerine rağmen, şimdiye kadar yerli ve yabancı akademisyenlerin dikkatini çekmemiştir.

Abstract

The records of the Catholic churches of Shkoder's province, which are saved in the State Central Archive of Albania (Tirana), are an important archival source for the researches of different fields. These archives contain a great historic and cultural value for the history of Albanian territories and more wide, during the XII- XX centuries, specially, when they were, under the Ottoman administration. During this period, Shkoder's city was a regional archive centre of the Catholic churches in Northern Albania. The records of Archbishopric of Shkoder, saved in the looked bookcases, are founded according to the rules of the Papal archive and partly to the direct orders of Pope. Their original documents begin in 1638 year and continue until 1967 year, when the religion institutions as mosques, churches and tekkes are closed from the dictatorship of the communist regime. In these archives, which they contain 5417 folders, are also saved a great number of the copies of the documents about the history of Albania, dating from the XII century, which the priests, periodically, have discovered and collected during their researches in the different archives and libraries of foreign countries. The language of these records is written in the Albanian, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Turkish. Even though they contain a great historical value, the attention of the domestic and foreign scholars to them, until nowadays has been fragmented.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katolik, kilise, İşkodra, Arnavutluk

Keywords: Catholic, Churches, Shkoder, Albania

Evaluation of the documents by the Catholic churches of the Shkoder's province

The archives play an important role in the historical and cultural heritage of the one stable nation. This treasure is an irreplaceable bridge between the past and the future in the history of the country, where constitute the material and spiritual life of the human society. Albania, just like other countries in the world, has a rich historical heritage that comes from the period of antiquity and it is considered in this way, as one of the richest possessors in Balkan, and Europe. In National Archive of Albania, there are the numerous series of the collections about the different personalities and families, administration institutions, commercial firms, societies, clubs etc., created during the historical periods. The earliest document belongs to the VI century, which is known as "Codex Purpureus Beratinus". The part of this heritage, a source of great value of knowledge for the studies in the history and cultural field, are also the archives of religious institutions, especially the archives of the Catholic Churches of the Shkoder's province¹. The town of Shkoder's city, known in history as Sutari or in the Ottoman records as "Iskenderiye", during the beginning of the XX century, together with being a cultural, educational and business center², was turned into a local archival center of the churches of the Northern Albania. In the "Hylli i Drites", (The Star of the Light" magazine it was written "from the records it is seen that Shkoder's city in Northern Albania had an Archbishopric from the 387 year..."³. The archives of the Catholic Churches in this center have never interrupted their activity about the creating and gathering records. They, also were interested in the collecting the manuscripts, archeological and ethnological objects, folk of people as dance, songs, which enlightened the history of the Albanian territories. Their activity is stopped only in 1967 year, when they were closed by the communist dictatorship, and are again reopened after 1990 year, when the regime changed to democratic system. The Albanian priests even under foreign rulers and communist regime, in every time they have evaluated the records as a treasure of the heritage of the civilization culture. They did not destroy any of them and have shown a special interest for their preservation in suitable conditions, for increasing their lifetime conveying them to the present and the future generations. The Catholic priests of Shkoder have preserved the baptismal, marriage and birth registers. Considering the fact that Catholic clergy in the city of Shkoder has been the most organized of all other religions, its archives have also been richer than the other institutions. The first stone of the biggest church constructed in Albania is placed in April 1858, by Shkoder's governor of the Ottoman administration, Avdi Pasha. The permission document for the church construction had arrived in 1851, but for the financial reason it was postponed seven years later. This document, according to the memories of Gjush Seldia, is saved before in the house of Gjon Currani, while its copy there is in the Archives of the Archbishopric of Shkoder⁴. For the construction of this church, known in the history as the Great Church of Shkoder, Sulltan Abdulmecid had sent as a gift of 700 lira of

¹. The province of Shkoder during the Ottoman administration, despite the changes from time to time, was divided into districts: the district of Shkoder and the district of Durres. The district of Shkoder included the sub-districts of Shkoder, Tuz, Lezhe, Puke, Mirdite, and Kruje. While the district of Durres included the sub-district of Durres, Kavaje, Shijak and Tirane (*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar* : Akademia e Shkencave te Shqiperise – Instituti i Historise, "TOENA", Tirane 2002, p. 42)

² . According to Sami Frasheri (Semseddin Sami), the city of Shkoder in the XIX century had 4500 houses, 1500 stores, a covered supermarket, 40 mosques, 1 library, 2 schools for students of the Muslim religion, 1 school for the Christian and 1 school for the Orthodox students . Its population was 37.000 people. (Sami Frasheri: *Shqiperia dhe Shqiptaret*", Translated from "Kamus-ul -Alam", by Zyber Hasan Bakiu, "Dajti 2000", Tirane, 2002

³ . "Hylli i Drites", Shkoder, 1940, nr.12, p. 565

⁴ . Gjush Sheldia, Kujtime, Qindvjetori i Katedrales se Shkodres, p. 92. (Memoires, 100 anniversary of Shkoder's Cathedral- These memoires there are in the National Library of Albania, (Tirane)

Turkish gold, which were brought by the financial employee of the Shkoder's province, with a veil covered with a hood and the gold balls⁵. The archive of the Archbishopric in Shkoder compared to the administrative organization, consisted of the archives dioceses, chapels and Jesuit and Franciscan order. Apart from their variety, these archives have the unity of a big group and try to preserve the resources of their activity. The archive of Archbishopric of Shkoder is a preserving center of the records of the dependable dioceses and chapels.

The rules for the creation and conservation of records

The records of the archives of the dioceses and chapels have a twofold aspects: 1. The functional aspect which includes the records of administrative archives, left in the Archives of Archbishopric. 2. The historical aspect which includes all records deposited in those archives after closing a case. According to the church rules for the archives, it was chosen to save them a special and secure place. The records were preserved in appropriate shelves, which were locked with keys. The archives were created like example of the Papal archives and according to the direct orders from the Pope. The duty of creating and preserving the records in the archives was assigned to the qualified bishops. The archive of the Archbishopric was signed to the secretary of the bishopric, dioceses, chapels, and priests, while the archives of the seminaries were assigned to their director. Among them, we can mention Pjeter Zarishti, Engjell Radoja, Ndue Bytyci, Dom Pashko, Preng Doci, etc. The creation of records would have a very important place in the secretary office of the archbishopric. They would be created on basis of the instructions sent from the Fida's Propaganda. The dispositions were concrete and very precise. For each case, it was created a record. This rule had created possibilities for their systematization and usage. The Congregation of Fidas Propoganda in the document sent to the Archbishopric of Shkoder on 5 August 1878 about the creation of the documents and the correspondence underlined that each of problem have to trait in separate letter and not some of problems in one letter⁶. The dioceses and chapels had hold a regular correspondence with Archbishopric of Shkoder. These reports are collected and had sent to the Fida's Propoganda. The reports of Shkoder's bishop sent to Fida's Propoganda are copied in a special register. In a register, the bishops had put his note about a Pope decree on sending of reports concerning the dioceses and chapels every three years⁷. The reports of the bishops about the chapels and dioceses were prepared in two copies. A copy was sent to the bishopric, while the other was registered in its own register. But when the chapels were joined together, the records of the closed chapel were passed to the chapel which continued its function. To know where the records of archives of the closed chapel were, a specific note was done. The Kodheli chapel carried out its undependable activity from 1849 to 1853. In the 1853 year this chapel joined to the Nenshat chapel. As a consequence, the archives of the Kodheli chapel had passed to the archives of the Nenshat chapel. Before the completion of joining these archives, their physical verification was done. Also, when the priests were living the archbishopric, the diocese, or chapel, an official report for the handing of the archives was prepared. The official report included a complete index of the content of records. The record classification of the archives was done on basis of the criteria of their origin, author or correspondent noticing their time limits. Such official reports were designed in year 1865 for the handing of the archives of the

⁵ . Hamdi Bushati: Shkodra dhe motet, "Rozafa 1", Shkoder, 2005, p. 137 (Hamdi Bushati: Shkodra ..., p.)

⁶ . Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit te Republikes se Shqiperise (The Central Archive of the State of Albania: AQSH i RSH , Fondi (F. Nr.) 132, Dossier (D.) 202, page (p) 1, year (Y.) 1878

⁷ . AQSH i RSH, F. 132, D. 3, y. 1906

Archbishopric of Shkoder from Luigj Curcia, and Engjell Radoja, and also the description of the kind of the records are preserved⁸.

The main records saved in the archives of Shkoder's churches

The organization of the archives was a continuous duty of the bishopric. On February 6th, 1906 year, Fida's Propaganda had written writes, among others to the Archbishopric that" is asking for a convincing organization of the Archbishopric archives". In ratio with the records, 5 main registers had occupied an important place: 1. Baptismal, 2. the marriage , 3. the death , 4. the population, and 5. The mass register. The registers of baptism, marriage, death, and the population were written down on a separate register for each year. As the masses were not finished within a year, but they continued the next year, a mass register was not kept every year. The Bishopric center, noticing that the above –mentioned registers were not written in the same language from the priests, particularly in Italian and Latin languages, in the 1906 year, he wanted to pay the attention to the fact their writing has to be unique and in the same language⁹. The above mentioned registers were requested from all the people of Christian religion for the practical needs. Therefore, it was stressed that they should be completed with the necessary data. A very special attention was given to the preservation of the baptismal books. In the register of the Shkoder's Bishopric, many years later, Pal Kamesi¹⁰ among other instructions had emphasized: The priest was hardly condemned, if he did not preserve the baptismal book¹¹. Every year the checking of these registers was done from the archbishops. At the end of checking, they were certified and sealed with the seal of the Archbishopric. The seal has been a necessary element in the records of the archives of the Catholic churches. Records, belonging to earlier historical periods that finished their practical activity were preserved in a special place in comparison to the other records. These records were preserved in a book – case with separate shelves and were put in order according to their type such as the old records, maps, memories and handwritings about history of the chapels and dioceses; the records in the Ottoman language, especially ,the documents that have had the connections with properties; records received from the Fida's Propaganda, etc. The archives, where these records were kept, were called "the old archives ", and in the official document was emphasized that " this old records should be preserved with great care"¹². Also, the archives of Jesuit and Franciscan order of Shkoder province, had occupied an important place in the history of Christian religion in Albania. These two kind of these archives of the Shkoder's Archbishopric constitute a great historical value , not only for the Albanian historiography. They are an important source for the history of Balkan, Europe and more. The archive of Jesuit Order, which is founded in the city of Shkoder in the 1842 year. This collection contains 261 folders and starts in 1184 with an agreement signed by Lucius Piu¹³ and continue until to the 1954 year. While the archive of Franciscan Order, founded in the 1861 year, has 1699 folders, included the 1710-1967 years. Until the foundation of chapels, the Franciscan missionaries took the records of their activity, the baptismal, marriage and death registers with them under their arms everywhere where they

⁸ . AQSH i RSH, F.132, D. 37, y.1865

⁹ . AQSH i RSH, F. 132, D.3, y. 1906

¹⁰ . Pal Kamesi in the 1742 year, being a church parish priest in the Tophane neighborhood, became the bishop of Shkoder. He, also administered for some time the church of Bar(Tivar) and performed as bishop for 29 years. He passed way in Kastrat and was buried in the church of this village, dating to the 1771 year. (Hamdi Bushati: Shkodra ... p.482)

¹¹ . AQSH i RSH, F. 132, D. 1, p. 15-16

¹² . AQSH i RSH, F. 132, D. 37

¹³ . AQSH i RSH, F. 134, D.1

were going and slept together with them”¹⁴. In Franciscan centres, apart from the difficult conditions of the period, and the different burning, it was made possible that many documents would escape the danger of disappearing. The chapel of Shala founded from Franciscan had an abundant archive. Despite the fact that during the last two centuries, this chapel was burned several times, Franciscan priests have saved the registers from burning. The registers of this chapel begin in January 1763, the year in which the chapel was founded. Shala's hospice was inhabited regularly by the Franciscans from the 1754 year, while the registers were opened in the 1763 year¹⁵. The archive of the Dukagjin's chapel began in 1695 year, the year in which the first Franciscan mission began its activity¹⁶. Among the Franciscan priests, who were dedicated to the preservation of the records, we can mention Gjergj Fishta, Shtjefen Gjecovi, Vicens Prenushi, Justin Rrota, etc. The main documents were registered in a special register for example the register for the years from 1904 to 1906, the accounting book of the Franciscan hospice during the years 1868, 1898- 1908, etc. The regularly chronological records kept in the registers of 1634-1857 years and in the register of the years 1888-1925¹⁷. The continuous attention of the Franciscan fathers had made that the manuscripts of Gjergj Fishta and Shtjefen Gjecovi, preserved until our nowadays. They were kept in the first section of the archive. These manuscripts had stayed together with the original copies of the books and translations about the Albanian Language and the history of Albania. In these archives, is also preserved a copy of the “ Meshari”¹⁸ of Gjon Buzuku(1555), copied by the original from the library of Vatican and manuscripts of the national and regional music of the great master Martin Gjoka¹⁹. A part of the records of the Franciscan order is kept by the Central State Archives and begins from the 1710 year. In the archives of the Zejmen chapel according to its priest Dom Pjeter Njeci, until the year 1913 was kept a manuscript in the Italian language with great care. According to this manuscript Gega of Kol Lek Dukagjini (an inhabitant of the northern parts of Albania) left all his properties for the Zejmen's chapel. The will was written in the 1579 year. But when the armies of Esad Pasha Toptani came, the priest had to leave and hardly escaped. The chapel with the archives was totally burned and this document finished on the fire²⁰.

The records of the province of Shkoder's Archbishopric – an important archival resource for historical studies

The records which are preserved in the Archive of the Archbishopric of Shkoder, began in the 1683 year with an instruction from the cardinal, the archbishopric of Napoli, concerning the witnesses in marriage cases²¹, while the first record of the collection of the Jesuit order begins with a pontifical agreement signed by Pope Lucius in the 1184 year²² and the collection of Franciscan order starts in the 1710 year. In comparison to the archives of the clubs, organizations, families, and the commercial societies, the archives of catholic churches,

¹⁴ . Hylli I drites,1942, p. 255

¹⁵ . Hylli I drites,1942, p.256, 259

¹⁶ .Hylli I drites,1942, p. 265

¹⁷ . AQSH i RSH, F.133, D. 332, 342, 443, 463

¹⁸ ” Meshari”, a book of mass prayers, written in the 1555 by Gjon Buzuku, is known until today as the first book in Albanian language. The bishop of Skopje, Gjon Nikolle Kazai from Gjakova, in 1740 year, discovered it in the library of Fida's Propaganda, near Roma. Pal Skiroi, rediscovered this book again in 1909 year in the Vatican Library, where the original there is today.

¹⁹ . Hylli I Drites, 1942, p.316

²⁰ . Hylli i Drites, 1941, nr.9-10, p. 501

²¹ . AQSH i RSH, F.132, D.1

²² . AQSH i RSH, F. 134, D.1

because of the holy “aureole”, which surrounded them, have continuously preserved carefully their document against different natural and human disasters. Despite the years in which they were written, they can be read without difficulty. But, parallels with records of religious character, Albanian priests have exercised a continuous and large activity in the collecting and preserving the records about the history and culture of Albanian territories. The attention of the Albanian catholic priests was also directed to the collection of the folk literature. The collection of folk literature was considered by them as a sacred work for the history and culture of the Albanian nation, because by them in a clear way, the mentality, the customs, and the whole spiritual history of Albanian of their past can be reconstructed. These songs are for Catholic priest, the oldest monument of the history of the Albanian people. Through them, besa (faith), the most solemn oath for Albanian, the virtue of Albanians, the epos of heroes, the great martyrs of Christianity and freedom are saved for many centuries. The priests were interested in the affirmation of the nation, the history and their genial creator. The great values of knowledge in the field of folk is in the 29 page manuscript of the Albanian language with bravery songs and other poetry written in the XIX century and in the beginning of the XX century and which was found in the Archive of the Archbishopric of Shkoder. In this manuscripts there are songs that are sung even today such as “Vaj si kenka ba dynjaja”²³ (How the world is done). Researchers of different fields of sciences, together with information for the history of the Catholicism in Albania, will find important resources on the archives of the catholic churches, about the economic, political, cultural and religion situation of the Shkoder province, different ethnographic and demographic problems etc. With much interest it is for the researchers a study about the ornamental costumes of the Catholic population of the Shkoder city and their classification is made according to the level of the economic situation. The study is written in the 1853 year in the Italian language²⁴. Their archives and libraries, established about 1853 year, together with books, published on different areas of science and religion, had saved in a special room with shelves, the copies of the historical records that they collected from different archives of Italy(Ankona, Vatican, Venetia, Rome, Napoli) , Austria, Spain and other European countries, where they were kept. Among them we can mention the register for the inventory of records materials collected and systematized from the collaborators of the “Saverian” college, the copies of records about the history of Albania during the years 1100- 1866²⁵, the lists of historical documents of Albania, that were in the mention archives of Ankona, during the 1365-1495 years²⁶, a copy of the list of historical documents about Albania’s history are extracted from the Austrian Archives, copies of historical documents that are related to Albania from the ancient times to the 19th century are also taken from the Civil Museum and the library of Padova and the archive of Bologna, which they belong to the 1211- 1684 years²⁷, the notes taken from the archives of Spain about the events developed in the 1596 year in Albania and they are published in the “Leka” magazine. Another group constitute the documents for 1280-1908 years , which they shed light on the genealogy of the famous Albanian as Balsha, Muzaka²⁸, Dukagjini, Kastrioti, Spani, Komnena²⁹, etc. A great value for the researches are the copies of records , published in Latin language, about the history of Albanian cities under the

²³ . AQSH i RSH, F.132, D.52, p. 1-29

²⁴ . AQSH i RSH, F.132, D. 8

²⁵ . AQSH i RSH, F. 134, D. 24, 178, 182, 183, 190,191,

²⁶ . AQSH i RSH, F. 134, D. 185

²⁷ . AQSH i RSH, F.134, D. 121

²⁸ . AQSH i RSH, F,134, D. 2

²⁹ . AQSH i RSH, F. 134,D. 232

Venetian administration. We can mention among these cities: Durrësi (1393-1395)³⁰, Ulqini, Tivari, Danja, Drishti, Budva, Kastrati, Kruja, Lezha, Niceta, Pulti, Shkodra, Vlora, Upper Zanta (1351- 1376)³¹, the castles of Danje, Drisht, Shkoder, Lezhe (1396- 1496). Researchers will find in these collections, also the historical notes for the other Albanian cities as Parga, Butrinti, Apollonia³², the arrival of the Slavs to the Albanian lands and their conquests, the migration of the Albanians people to Greece and Italy during the XIV - XVI centuries, the history of Camëria and (nowadays it is the part of Greek territory, inhabited during the centuries by Albanians). An important group in these collections are the records about the history of Albanian territories under the Ottoman administration. A great historical value have the permits of Sultan and his grants about building and reconstruction of the churches in this province as the church in Berdica (Shkoder) in 1912 year, the large correspondence between the Ottoman governors and the Archbishopric of Shkoder for the election of members of the Christian faith in Administrative Council, the cooperating in the establishment of a military hospital in Shkoder in 1898 year, the recognition of archbishops by the Ottoman administration as Pasquale Guerin in the 1888 year, the giving of the concerts in the city of Shkoder and its decoration during the organization of the different ceremonies by Turkish authorities, the taking of the actions against the spread of cholera in the Shkoder's province, especially in the years: 1835, 1836, 1893, 1911, 1912, etc. The part of these records are also the historical notices of the priests which belong to the history of George Kastriot Skanderbeg, his correspondence with the Pope and the King of Sicily, his resistance and battles against the Ottoman army, the siege of Shkoder from the Ottoman Empire, the wars of Ali Pashe Tepelena and his assassination from Sublime Porte, the anti-Ottoman uprisings of Albanian people, until the declaration of Albanian independence by the Ottoman Empire on 28 November 1912, etc. Researchers in their historical notes will find for their studies an important resource about the phenomena of nature occurring in Albanian territories such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, especially during the 1846-1853 years, the epidemic diseases like malaria and their damages.

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³⁰ . AQSH i RSH, F.134, D. 13

³¹ . AQSH i RSH, F.134, D. 4, 179, 212

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