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The Vilayet of Ioannina in Front of Hellenism

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Introduction

According to the regional Ottoman Yearly Report (1894), the Ioannina Vilayet was located “in the Ottoman Europe, across a long valley formed by the Adriatic Sea. [...] It is bounded in the East and South by Greece, in the West by the Adriatic Sea and in the North by the Vilayet of Monastery and Shkodra [...]”¹ Situated at a crossroad of civilisation and emigration, heir to imperial traditions, the Ioannina Vilayet was under the influence and pressure of various ideologies and propaganda. The most important and influential part in the population of this Vilayet was the Greek one.

The article “The Vilayet of Ioannina in Front of Hellenism”, as indicated by the title, focuses on the Vilayet of Ioannina and the process of Hellenisation there. It begins with a statistical account of the population of the Vilayet, with no intention whatsoever in addressing the accuracy or deficiencies of the statistics, goals, methodology and criteria used in their compilation.² The statistics are inserted in the introduction as an illustrative overview in support of the hypothesis-axis to the article, how the process of Hellenisation acted among the Albanians, influencing a final result, on the ethnographic map of the Vilayet of Ioannina and the Albanian-Greek relationship.

Contextualising this hypothesis’ testing mainly in national scale and macro-political dimension, not taking into account the sociological dimensions and local factors, we applied a critical discourse and text analysis to explore the power structures and goals of the use of Hellenism in the Vilayet of Ioannina. We approached our sampling units through a combination of

¹ Arkivi i Institutit të Historisë në Tiranë (hereinafter: AIH), A-IV-91 Salname of Vilayet of Yania (1894).

² About the accuracy or deficiencies of the statistics, goals, methodology and criteria used, especially at Ottoman Populations Statistics see: Ipek YOSMAOĞLU, Blood ties. Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908. Ithaca/NY, London 2014; Kemal H. KARPAT, Ottoman Population, 1830–1914. Demographic and Social Characteristics. Madison/WI 1985.

hermeneutics and text analysis research methods. Based on the hypothesis mentioned above, we first treated the Hellenism in view of the “Megali Idea” (Great Idea) and then, step by step, we discussed the territories of the Vilayet of Ioannina. A Front for Hellenism, focusing on the Greek schools and Church activities; Hellenism in Rivalry with Italian and Austro-Hungarian Propaganda; and at the end, the impact of the “Megali Idea” and the process of Hellenisation on Albanian – Greek relationship.

To date, studies on the Ioannina Vilayet and the process of Hellenisation are lacking in Albania. No Albanian researcher has specifically approached this topic. The only Vilayet that already has a dedicated, population-based study is the Kosovo one.³ The existing Albanian literature that touches upon various aspects of the Ioannina Vilayet is mainly of the genre of articles and belongs to the communist period. It reflects the frameworks of Marxist ideology and as such is biased in resources and treatment. Some examples are the articles of professors Aleks Buda and Filip Liço.⁴ In the context of post-90’s publications, the two studies of the late Kosovo colleague Shkëlzen Raça⁵ represent an interest in the general framework of Albanian-Greek relations. Despite the nationalist approach, a common strength of these two books is the use of archival documentation as well as Albanian and Greek literature.

The lack of Albanian literature has caused the foreign literature, with a focus on Hellenisation and the Ioannina Vilayet, to take up the main space in the bibliography used in the article. Thankfully, it is rich, bringing an interdisciplinary approach, diverse resources and balanced treatments. The literature used, both Albanian and foreign, has been completed and specified by archival documentation with Austro-Hungarian, Greek and Albanian having the most weight.

Some Statistical Data about the Vilayet of Ioannina

The Vilayet of Ioannina (Yanya) came into existence in 1867, as part of the framework of administrative reform that swept through the Ottoman Empire after 1864 and extended to the western part of the administrative division of Rumeli. Following its reorganisation, this Vilayet encompassed five sanjaks: that of Ioannina with its relevant kazas of Ioannina, Paramithia, Filyat, Metsovo, Konitsa and Leskovik; the Sanjak of Preveza with its relevant kazas of Preveza, Arta, Parga and Margalic; the Sanjak of Ergiri (Gjirokastra) with its kazas of Ergiri, Pogon, Përmet, Delvina, Himara and Tepelena; the Sanjak of Berat with its kazas of Berat, Vlora, Skrapar,

³ Kristaq PRIFTI, Popullsia e Kosovës, 1831–1912. Tiranë 2014.

⁴ Aleks BUDA, Shqiptarët përballë Krizës Lindore të viteve 1878–1879, *Studime Historike* 1 (1978), 3–18; Filip LIÇO, Politika greke ndaj Shqipërisë në vitet ‘60-të shek. XIX, *Studime Historike* 2 (1980), 99–126.

⁵ Shkëlzen RAÇA, Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-greke 1829–1881. Prishtinë 1990; IDEM, Gjurmime në historinë shqiptare. Prishtinë 2009.