



HISTORY, POLITICS, PRIMARY SOURCE STUDIES
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**The 8th Ottoman Kilise Defter concerning the Georgian
Faithful and Georgian Churches and Monasteries⁷**

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Abstract

The Ottoman Kilise Defters consist of 10 volumes, of which volumes 8, 9, and 10 concern the administration and governance of the churches and monasteries of Jerusalem, as well as the regulation of relations among different confessions. In addition to the above-mentioned registers, another kilise defters concerning Jerusalem is preserved in the archives of the Topkapı Museum, catalogued as TS.MA. d. 7016, which also contains documents of a similar type.

The eighth kilise defters measures 17.5 × 42.0 × 1.0 cm. The front cover is made of burgundy-colored leather, worn in several

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places. The pages and the text are well preserved, though some pages have come loose. It has no outer cover. On the front cover, the Ottoman inscription “قمامة دفتری” appears, along with two dates: Shawwāl of the year 860 (2–30 September 1456) and Rabī‘ al-Awwal of the year 1071 (4 November–3 December 1660). In Latinized Turkish it is labeled "Kilise Defteri No. 8".

The first page is unnumbered. Numbering begins on the following page, from 1 through 41, making a total of 42 pages, of which pages 3, 4, 15–21, and 36–39 are blank. The collection contains 18 entries, and information about Georgians in the eighth ecclesiastical register appears in documents 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

From the documents contained in the Ottoman ecclesiastical registers it becomes clear that the Georgian Church in Jerusalem had lost its independence. It fell completely under the authority of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Georgians no longer took part in disputes concerning Georgian property, although the Church of St. James and the Monastery of the Holy Cross still retained the designation “Georgian churches and monasteries.”

Keywords: Georgia, Ottoman Empire, ecclesiastical register, Jerusalem.

Introduction

In the city of Istanbul, within the Ottoman Archives of the Directorate of the Presidential State Archives of the Republic of Turkey, nearly 150 million documents of various types are preserved. As in other empires, great importance was attached to chancery work-document production-within the Ottoman Empire. Documents were created for various purposes: to record and describe facts or events, to carry out administrative governance, to grant and regulate conditional

land holdings, to collect taxes, and for many other functions. For centuries, the Ottoman authorities paid exceptional attention to the preservation and protection of documents. This is why the archives and libraries of the Republic of Turkey are so rich in historical sources and records (Makharadze, Shashikadze, Kashia, 2022: 13).

The Ottoman Archive consists of 33 collections, which include hundreds of sub-collections. The ecclesiastical registers of interest to us are held within the Bab-ı Asafi collection, which comprises 90 sub-collections, including the sub-collection of Kilise Defterleri (A.(DV-NS.KLS.d/ Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Kilise Defterleri).

The Ottoman Kilise Defterleri consist of 10 volumes, of which volumes 8, 9, and 10 deal with the administration and governance of churches and monasteries in Jerusalem, as well as the management of relations between different confessions. In addition to the aforementioned registers, another ecclesiastical register concerning Jerusalem is preserved in the Topkapı Museum archives, catalogued as TS.MA.d. 7016, which also contains documents of a similar nature.

Methods

In the present study, historical research and comparative analysis methods were employed. The historical sources and scholarly literature related to the topic under investigation were critically analyzed, as their examination and comparison are essential for an accurate and objective assessment of the events.

Results

The research revealed that, according to the Ottoman ecclesiastical registers, the Georgian Church lost its independence in Jerusalem. It came entirely under the authority of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Georgians no longer participated in disputes over Georgian property; however, the Church of St. Jakobs

and the Monastery of the Jvari retained the designation “Georgian churches and monasteries.”

Discussion

Brief Overview of the Registers

The Kilise Defter from the Topkapı Museum Archives measures 17.5 × 41.5 cm. On the inner side of the cover is the tughra of Abdulhamid I: "**Abdulhamid Khan, son of Ahmed Khan, always victorious [year 1187]**" (TS.MA.d.7016). The register consists of 44 pages, of which pages 1–22 are numbered. The text is transmitted across 24 pages. Pages 1a, 1b, 3b, 4a–b, 5a, 9a, and 16a–22b are blank. All pages containing entries are surrounded by a decorative frame. Based on the decree of Hijri 1152 (10 April 1749 – 29 March 1750), it can be assumed that the Greeks submitted 12 documents to the Ottoman imperial court, with a chronological scope from Hijri 15 to 1099 (636–1688 AD). Based on these documents, on 13–18 February 1740, two registry books were created: Kilise Defters 8 and 10. From the Greek inscriptions, it can be inferred that the 8th Kilise Defter was intended for the Greek Patriarchate and remained with them until the period of Mahmud II. Later, a copy was created and preserved in the Topkapı Archives. Subsequently, the 9th Kilise Defter was compiled for the Ottoman imperial chancery, which was periodically updated and corrected with annotations. These updates and corrections were based not only on the above-mentioned ecclesiastical registers but also on the Muhimme registry and other decrees, a process that continued until 1913.

The 9th kilisi defter measures 14.3 × 38.7 × 1.9 cm. On the label of the outer cover, the Ottoman inscription “Kumâme Defteri” (Register of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) appears, with the starting year noted as Hijri 862. It also bears the number 9, indicating that it is

the ninth Kilise Defter. The outer cover is decorated with gold-colored ornaments (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-1). The collection consists of 204 pages, numbered from 1 to 200. Pages 1 and 2 were originally blank and were filled in later. These same pages contain two annotations dated to Hijri 1022 (1613) and 1257 (1842). Both notes were written by the same person, with the first entered in 1851 (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-3). It is noteworthy that the pages numbered 1–95 are thicker than pages 96 and 97, and these in turn are thicker than pages 98–198. This indicates that the register was supplemented, revised, and expanded with additional pages at different periods. On page 3 of the collection appears the date Rabī‘ al-Awwal 1152 (8 June – 7 July 1739). This date is written in different ink, suggesting that it was added later (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-4). This page is copied from the 8th register, where the date 15 Dhū al-Qa‘da 1152 / 13 February 1740 is recorded (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-3). The collection contains 112 entries. Its chronological scope covers Hijri 15–1331 (636–1913 AD). It is written primarily in divan script, although examples of rika and naskh scripts also appear. The volume was compiled by several different scribes. The Mühimme registers were also used, and decrees were copied from them into the collection.

The 10th Kilise Defter measures 19.3 × 43.6 × 1.6 cm. On the burgundy-colored leather cover appears the Ottoman inscription: “Kamâme Defteri, min-evâhiri Rebîülevvel sene-i hicret 15, ilâ-evâili Cumâdelâhir sene 1099” (“Register of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, from the end of Rabī‘ al-Awwal of Hijri year 15 to the beginning of Jumādā al-Ākhirah of Hijri year 1099” — corresponding to 25 January–13 April 1688). The cover also bears a modern Turkish label: Kilise Defteri No. 10. The volume consists of 94 pages, of which only 20 pages contain text. Pages 1, 3, 4, 15–28, and 38–94 are blank. On page 5, which contains the decree of Caliph ‘Umar, the text is placed

within a gold-colored (shiny) frame (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-5). No other pages exhibit such decoration. The sequence in which the documents were copied from the original registers is preserved, though at one point, after a decree dated Hijri 1068 (1657) (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-9), 14 pages are left blank, and the next document is a decree from Hijri 1047 (1637). At the bottom of the page appears the date of compilation: 15 Dhū al-Qa‘da 1152 (13 February 1740) (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-4). This page differs in form and structure from the ones that follow, allowing us to conclude that it was inserted into the collection later and represents not a copy but an original draft (Ünal, 2019: 35). Variations in ink color and the influence of the rika script indicate that the register was not copied at one time; rather, it was corrected through comparison with the original documents. The 10th Kilise Defter contains 13 documents (entries, decrees). Almost all are written in divan script, with only a few in naskh. The chronological span covers Hijri 15–1099 (636–1688). It may be said that, except for page 2, all documents were copied at the same time. The collection was compiled between 15–20 Dhū al-Qa‘da 1152 (13–18 February 1740).

The Eighth Kilise Defter

The collection measures 17.5 × 42.0 × 1.0 cm. The front cover is made of burgundy-colored leather, worn in several places. The pages and the text are well preserved, though some pages have become detached. The register has no outer cover. On the front cover is the Ottoman inscription “قمامة دفتری”, along with two dates: Shawwal 860 (2–30 September 1456) and Rabi‘ al-Awwal 1071 (4 November–3 December 1660). In Latin-script Turkish it reads “Kilise Defteri No. 8.” The first page is unnumbered; numbering begins on the next page, running from 1 to 41, for a total of 42 pages. Pages 3, 4, 15–21, and 36–39 are blank.

Pages 1, 2, and 5 contain text framed within gold-colored (shiny) borders (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-3; g-4). No other pages contain such decoration. The date appears on the first page, outside the frame, in the lower-left corner: 15 Dhū al-Qa‘da 1152 (13 February 1740) (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-3). On the second page there is an informational note about the collection, with three or four lines intentionally left blank. This space was reserved for the insertion of a “ṣahḥ”, which served to confirm the authenticity of the register. Once the “ṣahḥ” was added, the book—despite being a copy—was regarded as an original. The word “ṣahḥ” attests that the document is correct and carries the authority of an original.

On page 40 a text is affixed (pasted), which states that the qadi of Jerusalem had his mandate renewed, dated 1223 (1808). On this same page appear the seals of various offices confirming the decree (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-17). The final page, page 41, contains five lines intended for the Greek Orthodox Patriarch (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-18). In the decree of Mehmed II found in the register, the year was originally written as 862 (19 November 1457 – 7 November 1458). Based on the ink color, it is evident that this date was written at the same time as the text. However, later the number **2** was altered with a dot, producing the year 860 (Ünal, 2019: 35). As in the 10th ecclesiastical register, here too the decree from Hijri 1068 (1657) (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-8) is followed by a decree from 1047 (1637) (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-9), with seven pages left blank between them.

The collection consists of 18 entries, written predominantly in divan script, with only a few sections in naskh. The chronological range of the documents spans Hijri 15–1223 (636–1808). Variations in ink color and thickness, as well as differences in calligraphy and style, suggest that the register was written by several different scribes. As

noted earlier, based on the decree of Hijri 1152, it is possible that the Greeks presented 12 documents to the Ottoman imperial court, covering the years Hijri 15–1099 (636–1688). On the basis of these documents, two registry books— Kilise Defter 8 and 10—were compiled between 13–18 February 1740. Greek marginal notes indicate that the 8th Kilise Defter was intended for the Greek Patriarchate, where it was kept until the period of Mahmud II.

Information about Georgians in the 8th Ecclesiastical Register is found in Documents 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Document 2 concerns the **shawmāla** of Caliph ‘Umar regarding the Christians living in Jerusalem, including the Georgians. The translation of this document, along with commentary and analysis, was published in 2018 by Professor Gocha Djaparidze (Djaparidze, 2018: 151–153). Therefore, we will not dwell on it here, especially since the document does not pertain to the Ottoman period in Jerusalem.

The third document in the register is dated Hijri 862 (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-4), which corresponds to the reign of Sultan Mehmed II in the Ottoman Empire. It is noteworthy that this document is also recorded in the 9th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-6) and 10th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-6) Kilise Defters, as well as in the Topkapı Archive register (TS.MA.d. 7016, GB5A1833-2 kopya).

According to the document, following the conquest of Constantinople, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Athanasius, like other rulers and leaders, presented himself to the Ottoman Sultan, bowed, and declared that the churches and monasteries in Jerusalem, from the time of Caliph ‘Umar onward, belonged to the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Among the various places of worship mentioned in the document, the Georgian Monastery of St. Jacobs is also listed. It is important to note that at this period Jerusalem was under the Mamluk rule, which makes it somewhat doubtful that the Patriarch of Jeru-

salem would have received the right to govern the churches and monasteries in Jerusalem directly from the Ottomans. However, it should be emphasized that at this time the Patriarch of Jerusalem was in exile in Constantinople, and his meeting with Mehmed II was a political maneuver coordinated with the Patriarch of Constantinople (Makharadze).

In 1512, Selim I ascended the throne of the Ottoman Empire, during which the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt was abolished. Jerusalem came under Ottoman control, and consequently, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed the Ottoman Sultan, the ruler of Jerusalem, to confirm the churches and monasteries. This petition is recorded in the 4th document of the 8th Kilise Defter (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-5). Similar documents are preserved in the 9th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-7), 10th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-6), and Topkapı archival registers (TS.MA.d. 7016, GB5A1833-2 kopya). It is noteworthy that in Document 4, the list of churches and monasteries is more complete than in Document 3. Alongside other churches and monasteries, Selim I confirmed to the Greek Patriarch the Georgian Monastery of St. Jacobs and the Monastery of the Djvari (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-5). During the final years of Mamluk rule, the leadership of the Orthodox faithful was held by local, non-Greek representatives. Nevertheless, the Georgian community represented a distinct group and was responsible for defending its rights not only against Muslims but also against Armenians, Franks, and even the Greek Orthodox community. A clear example of this is the activity of Beena Cholokashvili in the Holy Land (Djaparidze, 2011: 83–183). It should be noted that after the Ottoman conquest of the Holy Land, the Greek Orthodox Church benefited the most. It demanded from the Ottoman Sultan the confirmation of all churches, including the Georgian churches. According to Ts. Abuladze, the Georgian comm-

unity retained privileges in the Holy Land for some time. In Suleiman the Magnificent's law on the Pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, it is stated that pilgrims visiting the Church of the Resurrection did not pay taxes only if they were Georgians or Ethiopians (Abuladze, 2011: 374). However, the document explicitly states that the leader of all communities is the Orthodox Patriarch, and all their property belongs to him: "...and other churches and monasteries, and the Georgian, Ethiopian, Serbian, and other communities under the Patriarch, and their metropolitans and priests, and the property left by deceased metropolitans, bishops, and priests (belongs to the Patriarch)" (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-5).

The fifth document was issued in 1526 by Sultan Suleiman I, stating that he confirmed to the Greek Patriarch Germanus the properties that had been approved during the reign of his father, Selim I (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-5). This document is also preserved in the 9th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-8), 10th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-7), and Topkapı ecclesiastical registers (TS.MA.d. 7016, GB5A1834-2 kopya). According to the document, the Georgian Monastery of St. Jacobs and the Monastery of the Jvari of the Georgians and Mingrelians are under the authority of the Greek Patriarchate. It is noteworthy that the term "Mingrelians" appears only in this part of the ecclesiastical register.

The sixth document concerns the conflict between the Orthodox Patriarch and the Armenians (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-5). Like the previous documents, it is also preserved in the 9th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-9), 10th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-7, g-8), and Topkapı ecclesiastical registers (TS.MA.d. 7016, GB5A1834-2 kopya). The document states that the Patriarch of Jerusalem sent a letter to Sultan Murad IV, stating: "Since the conquest, all pilgrims coming to the Church of the Resurrection for worship or to venerate the Holy

Fire—from all directions, whether Armenian, Georgian, Frankish, Ethiopian, non-believers, or other Christian nations—have requested permission from the Orthodox Patriarch to conduct the reading of the Gospel and the litany in the lower and upper sections of the church and in front of the gate.” However, an Armenian named Gorgori, coming from the territory of Iran, obtained the relevant hujjet (official decree) through monetary influence and thereby placed themselves above the Orthodox faithful and the Patriarch. According to the document, in the Church of the Resurrection, they conducted the Divine Fire ceremony and liturgies in various locations without a leader, through oppression and humiliation, and in sin, using money as leverage. A court was convened, during which all parties presented their hujjehs. The court ruled in favor of the Greeks, after which Sultan Murad IV issued a decree: “Based on the above, all privileges for worship and prayer in the Church of the Resurrection—including reading the Gospel at the gate, conducting services in the upper and lower sections, nightly incense burning, and transferring the fire to candles every Friday evening—shall belong to the Orthodox faithful and Patriarch. Armenians, other peoples, Franks, Georgians, Ethiopians, and all other nations shall not interfere with the Orthodox faithful, the Patriarch, or any related rites.” The Georgians consistently sought to negotiate with the Ottomans and secure rights over their churches, a fact clearly demonstrated by the negotiations between the King of Kakheti and Lala Mustafa Pasha (Makharadze, Shashikadze, 2022: 133–146).

The seventh and eighth documents correspond to the reign of Sultan Mehmed IV and are dated 1657. They also concern the conflict between the Greek Patriarch and the Armenians (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-8 g-7, g-8). These documents are preserved in the 9th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-9 g-10, g-11), 10th (BOA, A{DVNSKLS.d d-10 g-8, g-

9), and Topkapı ecclesiastical registers (TS.MA.d. 7016, GB5A1834-2 kopya, GB5A1836-2 kopya). In the seventh document, the Patriarch requests the Sultan to confirm the churches and monasteries, among which the Georgian Monastery of St. Jacobs is mentioned. It is stated that: “The worship places and waqfs (ecclesiastical properties) of the Georgians, Ethiopians, Syrians, and Copts under the authority of the Patriarch have belonged to the Orthodox faithful and their Patriarch since the conquest of the holy city by Umar—may Allah be pleased. To confirm this, the Kufic decree and Ahid-names (books of privileges) were issued by the predecessors of the Sultan, by the will of God, by Sultan Selim Khan and Sultan Suleiman Khan. The Church of the Resurrection and its subordinate worship places, as well as the Orthodox faithful including Georgians, Ethiopians, Syrians, and Copts, are under the authority of the Orthodox Patriarch. Armenians, Franks, and other nations have no right to interfere or obstruct their activities.” However, the eighth document shows that the Armenians did not comply. With the help of Hussein, governor of the Gaza sanjak, the Armenians seized the Holy Georgian Monastery of St. Jacobs with its vineyards and storerooms, the iron doors of Bethlehem and their keys, as well as the Ethiopians’ waqf rooms and vineyards. These places were taken by the Armenians, who committed injustice and violence. As a result, the Greek Patriarch requested: “By the supreme decree signed with my happiness and based on the Sharia law, these monasteries, gardens, and properties shall be returned to the Greek community according to their old regulations; the wall erected by the Armenians in the middle of the garden shall be demolished; the keys shall be taken; and in the future, Armenians and other nations shall have no right to interfere, violate, or claim these properties.” Thus, the Sultan issued the following decree: “When this decree reaches you, act according to the regulations listed therein. The afore-

NSKLS.d, d-9, g-8, A{DVNSKLS.d, d-9, g-9, A{DVNSKLS.d, d-9, g-10, A{DVNSKLS.d, d-9, g-11}). İstanbul, Türkiye.

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