

EXTANT PRIVATE LIBRARIES OF ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPTS FROM BOSNIA: RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES¹

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Özet

Bosna'dan Oryantal El Yazmalarını Barındıran Mevcut Özel Kütüphaneler: Araştırma İmkanları

Osmanlı Bosnasından Oryantal (Arap harfli) el yazmalarının mevcut özel kütüphanelerinin çoğunluğu günümüzde Bosna-Hersek ve diğer ülkelerin halk kütüphaneleri ve arşivlerinde yer almaktadır. Nadiren farklı üniteler olarak muhafaza edilmelerine rağmen, orijinal içerikleri, kayıt defterleri ve kitapları bağışlayanlar ve satışını yapanlar hakkında bilgi içeren diğer belgelere ve el yazmaları üzerinde bulunan mülkiyet işaretlerine dayanarak belli bir derecede yeniden yapılandırılabilirler. Bu yeniden yapılandırma, yayımlanmış kataloglarda bulunan kitapların eski sahiplerine ait bilgiler sayesinde mümkün olmaktadır. El yazmaları, sıklıkla bunlara sahip olan kimselerin çeşitli dağınık yazılarını taşıdıklarından, böyle bir kolleksiyon biyografi,

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¹ This paper is based on the text that I presented at the symposium Writing and Book Culture in the Ottoman Empire (Istanbul, October 14-15, 2005, org. Institut français d'etudes anatoliennes). A shorter version was published in Croatian: Tatjana Paić-Vukić, "Sačuvane privatne zbirke arapskih, turskih i perzijskih rukopisa iz Bosne i Hercegovine: istraživačke mogućnosti" in: Zdravka Matišić (ed.), *Hrvatske Indije III, Zbornik u čast akademiku Radoslavu Katičiću* (Zagreb: Sekcija za orijentalistiku Hrvatskoga filološkog društva - Filozofski Fakultet, 2010), pp. 66-75.

şecere, mikro-tarih ve kltr tarihi arařtırmalarına materyal temin eder. Byle esaslı bir alıřma, sahiplerinin tanınmıř ya da tarihi kaynaklarda isimleri zikr edilmeyen sıradan kimseler olmalarına bakılmaksızın verimli bir giriřim olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Bosna Hersek'i, Arap harfli yazmalar, zel ktphaneler, eski sahipleri, arařtırma imknları.

Abstract:

Most of the extant private libraries of Oriental (Arabic-script) manuscripts from Ottoman Bosnia are housed today in public archives and libraries in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad. Although they are rarely stored separately as distinct units, their original contents can be reconstructed to a certain extent on the basis of registries and other documents comprising information on donors and sellers, and on the basis of marks of ownership that occur in the manuscripts. This reconstruction is facilitated today by indices of former owners from the published catalogues. Since the manuscripts not infrequently bear various scattered inscriptions by people who owned them, such collections provide materials for a wide range of biographical, genealogical, microhistorical and cultural-historical research. A broad study of this kind would be a fruitful enterprise, regardless of whether the owners were prominent persons or "ordinary" people not mentioned in historical sources.

Key Words: Ottoman Bosnia Herzegovina, Arabic-script manuscripts, private libraries, former owners, research possibilities.

To the memory of Dr. Muhamed Źdralović

Information on private libraries of Oriental (Arabic-script) manuscripts that once existed in Ottoman Bosnia can be gleaned from estate inventories of the deceased, which were entered in court registers, *sicills*; endowment documents, *vakıfnames*; ownership notes; lists of books that are occasionally found on pages of manuscripts, as well as from references to libraries in some works or

private or official letters.² In the last several decades, researchers have published a series of lists of books from Bosnian estate inventories, thus increasing our knowledge about the number and contents of once existent private collections of Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Bosnian Aljamiado manuscripts.³ Nonetheless, there is still an abundance of unexplored and underexplored materials.⁴ According to Yuzo Nagata, 76 *sicills* of the Sarajevo district, dating from the 1780s until the middle of the nineteenth century, which are housed in the Ghazi Husrev Bey Library in Sarajevo (the total number of *sicills* kept there is 88), comprise more than 5,200 lists of properties.⁵ Among other items, they occasionally mention books that had belonged to deceased persons. From them we learn that many Sarajevo Muslims possessed at least one manuscript codex, usually the Qur'an and/or a selection of *suras* entitled *En'am*, and that some families and individuals had up to two hundred volumes, rarely more. As in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, not only members of the educated elite owned manuscripts but also merchants, artisans, members of dervish orders and the military. The inventories also indicate which works were most

² For a systematic, detailed and lively account of the subject see: Muhamed Ždralović "Izvori za proučavanje knjižnica arabičkih rukopisa" [Sources for the Study of Libraries of Arabic-Script Manuscripts], *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, 24, 1-4 (1979-1980), 1985, pp. 103-22. It is regretful that this article, as well as other works by the late Dr. Muhamed Ždralović on the manuscripts from Ottoman Bosnia, especially his book *Bosansko-hercegovački prepisivači djela u arabičkim rukopisima* [Bosnian-Herzegovian Copyists of Arabic-Script Manuscripts], 2 vols. (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1988), are only available in the Croatian language.

³ See, e.g., Zejnil Fajić, "Biblioteka Abdulah-efendije Kantamirije" [The Library of Abdullah Efendi Kantamiri], *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, 13-14 (1987), pp. 15-36; idem, "Biblioteka Šejha Abdurrahmana Sirrije sa Oglavka: prilog istoriji bibliotekarstva BiH u XVIII i XIX stoljeću" [The Library of Sheikh Abdurrahman Sirri of Oglavak: A Contribution to the History of Librarianship in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the 18th and 19th Centuries], *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, 11-12 (1985), pp. 55-68; Rašid Hajdarović, "Zaostavština iza Ahmed-Munib-efendije Glode, mutevelije i džabije Gazi Husrev-begova vakufa" [The Legacy of Ahmed Munib Glodjo Efendi, the *mütevelli* and *cabi* of the Ghazi Husrev Bey's *Vakuf*], *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, 2-3 (1974), pp. 193-224; Lamija Hadžiosmanović, "Biblioteka i ulema" [The Libraries and the Ulema], *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, 17-18 (1996), pp. 259-65.

⁴ In recent years, Asim Zubčević of the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo has been examining estate inventories while preparing his doctoral dissertation on book ownership among Bosnian Muslims in Ottoman times.

⁵ Yuzo Nagata, *Materials on the Bosnian Notables* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa), 1985, p. 8.

frequently acquired and which were, judging by the prices entered for each item, considered especially valuable. Therefore, they are irreplaceable sources for the research of book culture, particularly book ownership, in Ottoman Bosnia.

However, the insights that can be gained from estate inventories are limited because they provide information about libraries that no longer exist in their entirety, the manuscripts of which can only occasionally be found scattered in various collections. If a library was recorded in an inventory compiled after the owner's death, it means that the books were distributed among the heirs or sold at public auction one by one, the money being divided according to the stipulations of the sharia inheritance law. Sometimes an heir would buy some books at the auction and thus keep them in the family,⁶ although references to these cases are quite rare. Furthermore, estate inventories are not always reliable sources for determining precisely which books were in someone's possession because they record only abbreviated titles. *Vakifnames* can be more informative in this respect: when titles of books were entered in such documents, remarks would occasionally be added regarding the contents and appearance of a particular codex.⁷ Nonetheless, neither estate inventories nor *vakifnames* can provide much data on a variety of aspects of book culture, particularly the culture of reading. The information that a person possessed/donated a book does not necessarily mean that he/she had actually read it.

On the other hand, private collections of manuscripts that have survived to our day can offer answers to questions that cannot be answered by mere lists of books or manuscripts collected from diverse sources. Today, such collections are rarely found in Bosnia and Herzegovina in private possession. Most of them are housed at archives, national libraries and other public institutions. For example, the Ghazi Husrev Bey Library, which has the largest collection of Oriental manuscripts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, comprising more than 10,000 codices, keeps manuscripts from a

⁶ Ždralović, "Izvori za proučavanje," p. 117.

⁷ See, e.g., the detailed list of manuscripts from the *vakifname* of Husamuddin of Banja Luka, from the year 1638, published by M. Ždralović in: "Izvori za proučavanje," pp. 107-11. There occur some quite elaborate entries, for instance: "A large and beautiful copy of the Noble Mushaf [a complete copy of the Qur'an], calligraphically written, with golden dots, signs of the seven ways of reading, set within six frames." *Ibid.*, p. 107.

number of old *vakıf* and private libraries, which were gradually transferred to it from Sarajevo, Mostar, Travnik, Foča and other towns since 1867.⁸ Among the former owners are the Sarajevan *mufti* from the first half of the 19th century, Mehmed Šakir Muidović,⁹ the renowned families of Džinić, Muzaferija, Hromić and Saračević; the bibliophile and researcher Osman Asaf Sokolović (1882-1972), the chronicler Muhamed Enveri Kadić (1855-1931), and many other individuals and families from Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁰ Besides private libraries that were donated or sold to the Ghazi Husrev Bey Library by their owners, some came indirectly, having first been donated to a public library back in the Ottoman times. For example, collections of manuscripts that had belonged to renowned writers of Mostar – Derviš Pasha Bajezidagić, Mustafa Ejubović and Ibrahim Opijač – were transferred to Sarajevo as parts of the Karađoz Bey's public library.¹¹

Although the manuscripts of the Ghazi Husrev Bey Library have been catalogued without regard to their provenance, according to subject matter, the original contents of private collections can be reconstructed to a certain point because each of the 17 volumes of the catalogue published until now contains an index of former owners and persons who established libraries as their pious endowments.¹² On the basis of information from the indices of all the

⁸ Kasim Dobrača, "Uvod" [Introduction] in: *Katalog arapskih, turskih i perzijskih rukopisa / Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka u Sarajevu* [Catalogue of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian Manuscripts / The Ghazi Husrev Bey Library in Sarajevo], compiled by K. Dobrača, vol. I (Sarajevo: Starješinstvo Islamske vjerske zajednice za SR Bosnu i Hercegovinu, 1963), pp. XIV-XV.

⁹ A part of Muidović's library was acquired by Aleksei Olesnicki for the Oriental Collection of the former Yugoslav, today Croatian, Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb. Muhamed Ždralović, "Aleksej Olesnicki i Orijentalna zbirka Jugoslavenske akademije" [Aleksei Olesnicki and the Oriental Collection of the Yugoslav Academy], *Radovi Arhiva JAZU*, II (1973), p. 100.

¹⁰ For more information on former owners, see: Dobrača, *ibid.*; see also:

http://www.ghbibl.com.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=70&lang=en (accessed October 5, 2011)

¹¹ Dobrača, "Uvod," p. XIII. On private libraries that were donated to the *vakıf* library of Osman Šehdi, which was later transferred to the Ghazi Husrev Bey Library, see: Hatidža Čar-Drnda, "Neki legati Osman-Šehdijine biblioteke" [Some Legacies in the Library of Osman Šehdi], *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, XV-XVI (1990), pp. 243-52.

¹² For basic information about the published volumes of the catalogue, see: http://www.ghbibl.com.ba/index.php?option=com_content&view=cate

volumes, the manuscripts that belonged to one person or family can be linked to each other, which is the first step toward a more systematic examination of these collections as separate units. However, it would be all too optimistic to expect a complete reconstruction of the contents of what were once private libraries. Aside from the fact that parts of a collection had already been dispersed before it was handed to the Ghazi Husrev Bey Library, the frequent absence of ownership marks or other references to former owners further hinders full reconstruction.

In Sarajevo, parts of some private libraries are also kept in the Oriental Collection of the Bosniak Institute, for example, manuscripts that belonged to the renowned Sikirić family.¹³ In the Historical Archives of Sarajevo, the collection of manuscripts and printed books that was owned by the distinguished intellectual and member of the Bosnian *Ulema Meclisi* Mehmed Teufik Okić (d. 1932) is kept as a distinct unit and will be catalogued separately.¹⁴ In the present context, the manuscripts of the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo should be mentioned with great regret. Among the more than 5,000 codices that were destroyed when the building of the Institute was shelled and burned down in 1992, there were substantial parts of private libraries, the contents of which cannot be reconstructed.

Outside Bosnia, the University Library in Bratislava houses the greatest part of the collection that belonged to the Bosnian Orientalist, poet and politician Safvet-beg Bašagić (1870-1934), while about thirty of his manuscripts are kept at the Oriental Collection of the Archives of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb. Also in Zagreb, in the National and University Library, there is the collection of manuscripts of the Sarajevan Muhibić family, which will be discussed in more detail presently.

gory&id=13:catalogue-of-arabic-turkish-persian-and-bosnian&Itemid=127
&layout=default&lang=en (accessed October 5, 2011).

¹³ Fehim Nametak and Salih Trako, "Predgovor" [Foreword] in: *Katalog arapskih, perzijskih, turskih i bosanskih rukopisa Bošnjačkog instituta* [Catalogue of the Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Bosnian Manuscripts of the Bosniak Institute], prepared by F. Nametak and S. Trako, vol. I (Zürich: Bošnjački institut, 1997), p. 7.

¹⁴ See: Sejdalija Gušić, "Predgovor" [Foreword] in: *Catalogue of the Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Bosnian Manuscripts in The Historical Archive Sarajevo* (prepared by Mustafa Jahić), (London – Sarajevo: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation – The Historical Archive Sarajevo, 2010), p. XIII.

Some of these libraries, such as Bašagić's and Sokolović's, were formed after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878). Although they are doubtlessly precious collections of sources for the exploration of the history and culture of Ottoman Bosnia, they are not suitable for the kind of research that I am proposing here. First and foremost, I have focused on libraries that were formed and owned in Ottoman times by persons who were immersed in the Bosnian Ottoman cultural world, who approached manuscripts as a living presence and not as remnants of the cultural past of their community.

Among such libraries, those bearing an abundance of inscriptions by former owners are especially valuable. Besides notes in the margins and on blank pages, there also occur private or official letters and pieces of paper inserted in codices, with records of debts, estate inventories, funeral expenses, poems, sayings, magical formulae and other annotations. Sometimes one or even several personal notebooks can be found of miscellaneous contents, *mecmuas*, compiled by the owner. Owing to these records, manuscripts of a private library can be approached as sources for biographical, historical and cultural-historical research. After determining the characteristics of the owner's handwriting, in order to distinguish his annotations from those entered by other persons who used the manuscripts, it becomes possible to link and interpret fragmentary records that are not infrequently neglected in work on individual manuscripts.¹⁵

On the basis of the owner's references to his social status, members of his family, persons from his milieu and some events from his life, a kind of genealogical and biographical "skeleton" can be constructed. Of course, not every private library will be eloquent in this respect. Careful examination of all the inscriptions can provide insights into the owner's reading and writing habits, intellectual inclinations, traces of local culture, manifestations of orally transmitted knowledge, modes of self-presentation etc. Entire texts authored by the owner (if there are any) would reveal his creative capacities in poetry or prose, and proficiency in Oriental languages.

¹⁵ When referring to the owners of libraries that would be suitable for such research, I do not use the alternative form his/her because I have not as yet come across any library possessed by a woman in Ottoman Bosnia that would be rich in the owner's personal records. Of course, there is always a possibility that such a library will surface in further examinations of manuscript collections.

Needless to say, the composition of a library in itself also bespeaks the owner's preferences.

I examined the possibilities for such research while working on the aforementioned collection of manuscripts of the Sarajevan Muhibić family, which is housed at the National and University Library in Zagreb.¹⁶ A particularly favorable circumstance was the fact that it was the only collection of Oriental manuscripts in the institution. Therefore, even in the absence of ownership marks, the common provenance of all the manuscripts was beyond doubt. The majority of the 164 codices were collected by Mustafa Muhibbi (d. 1854), a *kadi* and court scribe from Sarajevo, and the remainder by his son and grandson. I examined the manuscripts and collected the data that enabled me to gain some insights into Muhibbi's judicial and scribal career, his social status, intellectual activities, beliefs and many other aspects of his lifeworld. During my research, I explored diverse modes of approaching *mecmuas*, marginalia and occasional jottings, trying to make a suitable conceptual framework for a study based on these fragmentary sources. My conclusion is that research of this kind can hardly result in a rounded picture of a concrete historical individual. Therefore, instead of striving for a narrative that would hide the lacunae in our knowledge for the sake of a seemingly coherent and convincing story of someone's life, I decided to present and interpret the insights gained from the library as a series of thematic units with Mustafa Muhibbi as the common figure.¹⁷

A broader study, which would encompass a number of extant libraries of Oriental manuscripts from Bosnia, would broaden our knowledge of the lives, as well as the reading and writing practices, of people of different social and educational backgrounds. It would be a valuable enterprise, regardless of whether the owners were prominent and knowledgeable persons or individuals who were not renowned in their days. Thus, the inscriptions from manuscripts that

¹⁶ Basic information on the manuscripts of this collection are available at the website of the National and University Library in Zagreb: <http://www.nsk.hr/DigitalLib1c.aspx?id=287> (accessed October 4, 2011) and in Appendix II of Tatjana Paić-Vukić, *Svijet Mustafe Muhibbija, sarajevskoga kadije* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2007), pp. 201-36; English edition: *The World of Mustafa Muhibbi, a Kadi from Sarajevo*, translated by Margaret Casman-Vuko et al. (Istanbul: ISIS, 2011), pp. 166-210.

¹⁷ See the above-mentioned book.

were in the possession of a well-known writer could add more information to his biography and also reveal – through his drafts, comments and excerpts from the books he read – the process of the creation of his works. A compelling example in this regard, although not from the field of Ottoman studies, is the research conducted by the Russian Arabist I. Y. Krachkovsky (1883-1951). He studied the life and work of Shaykh Muhammad Ayad al-Tantawi, an Egyptian who was a professor of Arabic at the University of St. Petersburg in the 1840s. In the intellectual autobiography *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, Krachkovsky narrates the long process of creating the study based on Tantawi's 150 manuscripts filled with his marginalia, comments, drafts and complete texts he had composed.¹⁸ These sources enabled Krachkovsky to construct a biographical framework and follow Tantawi's intellectual development. The research lasted – with frequent stagnations – for fifteen years, in which long periods when it seemed that the central figure would remain unreachable were interrupted by unexpected and rewarding, at times even emotionally charged, discoveries. The story of this study, which Krachkovsky singles out as one of his favorite works, reveals both the pleasures and hardships of scrutinizing manuscripts from a private collection in an attempt to piece together fragments of the owner's life.

In other cases, the examination of private libraries could lead to the discovery of works written by persons who did not belong to the educated elite of their society and who composed prose or poetry, which remained only in the manuscripts they kept in their homes. In the year 1932, a Bosnian researcher, Riza Muderizović, wrote a short biography of the modest Sarajevan court and public scribe Molla Muhamed Mestvica (d. 1864), mostly composed on the basis of inscriptions from manuscripts and letters he had found in what was left of Mestvica's library.¹⁹ He also discovered several works on divination composed by him, and an abundance of scattered

¹⁸ Ignatij Julijanovič Kračkovski, "Nad arapskim rukopisima" [Among Arabic Manuscripts], translated by Vladimir Osipov, *Treći program Radio-Sarajeva*, 1983, chapter "Od Kaira do Volkova groblja u Petrogradu (1916-1930)" [From Cairo to the Volkov Cemetery in St. Petersburg (1916-1930)], pp. 88-94. My knowledge about Krachkovsky's study is based on his above-mentioned autobiography and not on the study itself, the text of which was not available to me.

¹⁹ Riza ef. Muderizović, "Biografija Mulle Mestvice i korespondencija Murad-kapetana Gradaševića iz 1818-1819. godine" [Biography of Molla Mestvica and the Correspondence of Captain Murad of Gradačac from 1818-1819], *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja u BiH*, XLIV (1932), pp. 69-83.

chronicle records, medical advice, notes on casting spells and personal observations. In this paper, written long before "ordinary" people came into the focus of historiography, Muderizović emphasized the need for studying the lives and works of persons of modest social standing and formal education but of fruitful intellectual activities, such as Mestvica.²⁰ In this regard, the manuscripts from their private libraries are doubtlessly irreplaceable materials.

Thanks to the work of the specialists who catalogued most of the Bosnian collections of Oriental manuscripts, the necessary basis for such research has been provided. Furthermore, achievements in cultural history, intellectual history, microhistory, history of mentalities and other disciplines of what is called "the new history," which have been increasingly adopted and developed in Ottoman studies, permit a shift in the approach to extant private libraries from mere description toward interpretations of their various contents.

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²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 69.

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