



ARCHIVES I. TURKISH ARCHIVES CONCERNING IRAN

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Ottoman archive materials are important not only for the history of the Ottoman Empire, but they are also of tremendous significance for the history of all those countries that had relations with the Ottoman Empire. Of all various archives, only the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi contains more than 100 million documents. As far as the documents related to Iran are concerned, two archives are of special importance, both of them in Istanbul: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (The Ottoman Archive of the Office of the Prime Minister) and Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (The Archive of Topkapı Palace Museum).

I. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (hereinafter BOA). For the major part this archive contains documents belonging to the Divân-ı Hümâyûn (*Divân-e Homâyun*, The Imperial Council) and the Bâb-ı Âşaf[^] (*Bâb-e Âşafî*, The Sublime Porte). Moreover, the documents from the time of Sultan Abdülhamid ('Abd-al-Ḥamid) II (r. 1876-1909), which were formerly collected in Yıldız Palace (*Yıldız Sarayı*), are now kept as *Yıldız Arşivi* at BOA as well.

It is evident that the archive material of the Ottoman Empire was very well maintained, already from the early times. However, a number of older documents were destroyed by Timur (d. 1405) during his conquest of Bursa,



then the capital of the Ottoman Empire, after the battle of Ankara in 1402 (Aktaş and Halaçoğlu, p. 122). Besides, only a small number of documents and registers is related to the 15th century. It is clear that from the time of Sultan Süleymān (Solaymān) I, the Magnificent (r. 1520-66) onwards the amount and variety of documents increased.

The idea of establishing a modern archive in the Ottoman Empire dates from the middle of the 19th century. After the Tanzimat (1839), the Hazīne-i Evrāk Neẓāreti (*Ḳazina-ye awrāq-e neẓārati*, Ministry of Ancient Documents) was founded in 1262/1846, and soon afterwards the process of counting and classifying the documents began (Çetin, 1982, pp. 96-126). This work continued in the first half of the 20th century under the supervision of famous scholars, such as Abdurrahman Şeref (d. 1925), Ahmed Refik (Altunay, d. 1937), Ali Emirî (d. 1924), İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal (İnal, d. 1957), Muallim Cevdet (İnançalp, d. 1935), Kâmil Kepecioğlu (d. 1952), and Lajos Fekete (d. 1969). Out of the approximately 350,000 registers and 100 million documents, 75 percent have been classified and catalogued up to the present (2008).

The Ottoman archives consist of *evrāk* (*awrāq*, individual documents) and *defter* (*daftar*, bound registers). These are closely correlated with each other by the virtue of texts recorded in registers, and the contents of the registers being copied into documents (Takamatsu, p. 128).

One of the most important groups of the bound registers is the *Tahrir Defterleri* (or *defter-i kâqāni*, the Cadastre Records). They contain, in detailed (*mofaşşal*) and brief (*ejmāl*, *mojmal*) versions, economic surveys (*tahrir*) of the districts listing all the human and economic resources, town-by-town and village-by-village. These registers provide very important and detailed social, economic, demographic, and legal information for scholars (Barkan, 1940, pp. 20-59; Idem, 1941, pp. 214-47; Hinz, pp. 177-201; Afyoncu, pp. 311-14).

There is evidence from the 15th century that these registers had already existed in the Ottoman financial administration in the second half of the 14th century (Uzunçarşılı, 1988, p. 102). However, the oldest *tahrir* register still existing today belongs to the district of Albania and dates from 835/1431. Altogether, there are 1,094 *tahrir* registers dating from 835-1300/1431-1882 at the BOA today. Of these, 30 *tahrir* registers are directly or indirectly related to Iran. Amongst these, 13 detailed (*mofaşşal*) *tahrir* registers are of special importance. They date from 1137-42/1724-29 and belong to Azarbaijan and southwestern Iran, which was conquered by the Ottoman Empire during this



period. The number of these registers and their respective districts are as follows: *Tapu Tahrir Defteri* (hereinafter *TD*), nos. 895, 901 (Māku); 896, 902 (Ardabil, Sarāb, Miāna); 904, 908 (Tabriz); 906, 907 (Hamadān); 909 (Marāğa); 910 (Orumia, Salmās); 911 (Koy, Qarā Tāğ); 912 (Kermānšāh, Korramābād, Lorestān); 1066 (Ardalān) (see Özgüdenli, 2003, pp. 83-107). Beside these registers, there are two other brief (*mojmal*) *tahrir* registers of major importance dating back to the late 16th century (*TD*, nos. 645, 648; [FIGURE 1](#)).

Ottoman *tahrir* registers contain important materials about the social, economic, religious, and agricultural history of western and southwestern Iran. Moreover, they provide elaborate demographic, topographic, and onomastic data. Publication of these registers can shed a new light on the social and economic history of Iran during the Safavid period, as there are no other Iranian sources comparable to them.

Beside these *tahrir* registers on Iran there are other registers on Georgia, Armenia, and Azarbaijan in BOA (*TD*, nos. 898, 901, 903, 905, 913, 914; Revān, Ganja, Tiflis/Tbilisi, Naķčevān). They most probably date from 1725-28 and can also contribute to research on the social and economic history of the Safavids (*TD*, no. 903, pp. 4-6; Mehmedov, 1990, pp. 201-3; [FIGURE 2](#)). Besides these, there are many other *tahrir* registers on Ottoman districts in Middle and East Anatolia, which can help to learn more about the relations between Turkmen tribes and the Safavids in the 16th century (Kırzioğlu, 1979, pp. 201-22; Sümer, 1992, pp. 215-18).

Mühimme (*Mohemma*) registers are the series that contain a copy of the state's crucial decisions and state letters issued by the Divān-ı Hümāyūn. These registers provide information on the structure of administrative organs of the state, their relationships and functions. Due to their importance, these registers have been dealt with in various studies. Altogether, there are 266 *mühimme* registers dated between 961/1553 and 1323/1905 in BOA today. In these registers one can find important information on the political, religious, and military relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Iran beginning from the second half of the 16th century (Kütükoğlu, 1993; Kırzioğlu, 1998). They can be especially helpful in understanding how the Ottoman Empire conducted wars against Iran, since they can complete the information available in other historic sources. Some of these registers, which are important for the history of Ottoman-Safavid relations, have been the subjects of several M.A. dissertations (Kar, 2002; İzgi, 2006; Erkan, 2007).



Among the 26,000 *Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler* (hereinafter *MAD*, Financial Registers), which were handed over from the Finance Ministry to BOA in 1945 and catalogued in 25 volumes, there are records which are very important for the history of Iran (*MAD*, nos. 590, 3959, 10171, 22216; [FIGURE 3](#)). These registers belong to the *Bāb-ı Defterī* (Treasury) and most of them contain financial and military data. Moreover, among the archive materials from İstanbul Defterdarlığı (Istanbul Department of Revenues), which were sold to Bulgaria in 1931, there are some documents and registers pertaining to Iranian history.

Among the *Gümrük* (*gomrok*, Customs) registers in the BOA, some of the registers belonging to the Erzurum customs contain important information on Turkish-Iranian trade. The register of the Erzurum customs, which were the second most important customs in the Ottoman Empire, was the subject of a Ph.D. dissertation by Neşe Erim (1985), which reveals important data on Ottoman-Iranian trade in the 18th century.

The *Nāme-i Hümāyūn* (*Nāma-ye Homāyun*, The Royal Letters) registers in BOA contain copies of some important letters exchanged between the Ottoman Empire and Iran (Kılıç, pp. 235-37). The *Haṭṭ-ı Hümāyūns* (*Ḳaṭṭ-e Homāyun*, Imperial Writings) also include some material of relevance for the Ottoman-Iranian relations in the 18th century.

Besides the registers (*defter*), there are many documents (*evrāk*) in the BOA related to the Ottoman-Iranian relations from the 16th to the 19th century. They can be found under the classification Ali Emirî (54 volumes), Muallim Cevdet (37 volumes), İbnülemin (30 volumes), Kâmil Kepeci (1 volume), Lajos Fekete (1 volume), Hatt-ı Hümâyûn (32 volumes), Muahedeler (2 volumes), Müzehheb Fermanlar (1 volume), and also as decree (*fermān*), letter (*nāme*, *mektub*), and report (*arīza*). Some of these documents have been used for research (Kalantari, 1976; Djafer-pour, 1977; Yans, 1977; Nasiri, 1991; Kütükoğlu, 1993; İşbilir, 1996; Arı, 2001).

Most of the documents contain records of political and military events, incidents at the border, problems of trade, sending of envoys, exchange of gifts, seeking of asylum, and activities of secret services. Moreover, there are several documents related to the Persian language and literature, Iranian poets and their poems, and Iranian intelligentsia who emigrated to the Ottoman Empire. Only very few of these documents have been studied so far.



In 2007 some catalogues of the BOA were entered into a database. Nowadays researchers and scholars can find some of them at www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/katalog. However, this catalogue contains some sad typing and spelling errors, such as “Erbil” for “Erdebil” and “Salamas” for “Salmās”.

II. Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (hereinafter TSMA). The second largest archive collection in Turkey is the Archive of the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul, which contains about 153,000 records (documents) and 10,775 registers. The major part of this archive consists of documents that were considered important by the Ottoman Sultans and were kept in Hazīne-i Hümāyūn (*Kazina-ye Homāyun*, The Imperial Treasury). These documents were classified as *evrāk* (*awrāq*, code E, Individual Documents) and *defter* (*daftar*, code D, Registers). Only some documents of the TSMA have been catalogued and published until today (*Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşiv Kılavuzu*, I, 1938; Uzunçarşılı *et al.*, 1985).

Most of the documents in the TSMA that are relevant to the history of Iran belong to Iranian or Transoxanian dynasties, especially to Timurids (Timur, Şāhroḡ, Abu Sa‘id, Ḥosayn Bāyqarā), the Qarā Qoyunlu (Jahānšāh), the Āq Qoyunlu (Uzun Ḥasan, Ya‘qub Beg), and Safavids (Esmā‘il I, Ṭahmāsb I, and ‘Abbās I). Usually these documents include *fermāns* (*farmān*, Imperial decree), *mektubs* (*maktub*, letter), and *‘arīzas* (report) in Persian or Turkish. It is difficult to find a definite answer to the question of why documents of inner exchange between these dynasties can be found in Istanbul, but one can assume that these documents were brought to Istanbul during or after the Ottoman wars and conquests in eastern Anatolia and western Iran.

The major part of these documents date to the period between the 15th to the 18th centuries. They are important not only due to their contents, but also from the point of view of the development of Persian paleography, diplomatic relations, and statesmanship. Some of the documents belonging to the Qarā Qoyunlu, Āq Qoyunlu, Timurid and Safavid dynasties were published by scholars like Akdes Nimet Kurat (1940), M. Tayyib Gökbilgin (1957), Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (1957), Heribert Busse (1959), İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı (1959, 1986), Bekir Kütükoğlu (1960), Jean Aubin (1965), Şehabettin Tekindağ (1968), Moḥammad-Rezā Nāşeri (1974), Mohammad Mokri (1975), Mehmet Şefik Keçik (1976), Lajos Fekete (1936, 1973, 1977), and Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont (1975-91). Yet, there are other important Persian and Turkish documents which still await their publication.



Some of the documents in the TSMA are reports (*'arīza*) which were sent to the Ottoman Empire by spies from Iran and Central Asia (Fekete, 1977, pp. 114-15, 260, 298, 302, 320). These reports contain important political and military information on the Safavids. Moreover, there are some documents, such as *fermān*, *hüküm*, *berāt*, and *'arīza*, which contain important information on Iranian-Ottoman wars (E. 5465, 5825, 7095, 9294/8, 9300/3). Besides political and military documents, there are other records which contain information on cultural relations between the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Among them there is a *ehl-i hūref* (*ahl-e heraf*) register containing a list of artists which were brought by Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-20) from Tabriz to Istanbul after the battle of Çaldıran (*Çālderān*) in 1514 (see Uzunçarşılı, 1986, pp. 23-76).

III. Other Archives. The following archives in Turkey deserve special mention: Deniz Müzesi Arşivi (Archive of Naval Museum, Istanbul), it contains documents on the Ottoman naval history; Hariciye Arşivi (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ankara); Müftülük Arşivi (Archive for Religious Affairs, Istanbul); Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi (Archive of General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre, Ankara), it contains 2,322 *tahrir* registers; Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi (Archive of General Directorate of Foundations, Ankara), it contains many *waqfiyas*; and Muallim Cevdet Arşivi (Muallim Cevdet's Archive, in Belediye Library, Istanbul), it contains documents and registers collected by the Turkish scholar Muallim Cevdet (d. 1935). There are other Ministry archives in Ankara, but it is quite unlikely that they have any documents related to Iran.

Besides these public archives there are private archives and collections in Istanbul and Ankara that contain an unknown number of documents. We can only assume that some of these documents contain information which is directly or indirectly related to Iran.

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