

## WORLD TREASURES OF STATE ARCHIVES

(as extracted from the web site: [www.albarchive.gov.al](http://www.albarchive.gov.al))

Albanian National Archives or General Directorate of Archives (GDA) is the most important archival institution in the country, in which place are collected, preserved, managed, and served important records that witness about the history of the nation and Albanian State. The history of the archives in Albania is closely connected with the history of the nation itself, and the state, and it is a result of the processes and phases of their development. The beginnings of the archival activities go back to antiquity, at a time when in the libraries of the Illyrian states, along with the books, they also used to preserve records. The first record which mention the efforts to establish the Historic Central Archives, is a Decision of the High State Committee, of date 02.01.1931, in which is discussed the bye-laws draft for registering of important events. The State Archives were created as a dependent sector to Institute of Studies in 1947.

According to the order no. 21, of date 08.06.1949 of the Council of Ministers (see AQSH of RSH, F. 890, V. 1949, D 501), the State Archives was declared as an independent institution. In 1951, the State Archives passed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, until 1962. This very year, was created the General Directorate of State Archives, which was subject to the Council of Ministers (see AQSH of RSH, F 890, V. 1960, D. 27).

In 19.06.1984, for the first time, the Albanian Parliament passed the law "On archival fond of the State and the Archives". After the changes of the political system, in July 1994, the Albanian pluralist Parliament of Republic of Albania, based on the article 16 of the law no. 7491, of date 24.04.1991 "On major dispositions of the Constitution", in conformity



Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë e  
Shkodrës - pikturë  
originale

with the proposal of the Council of Ministers, passed the law "On the national archival fond and the archival work". Based on the articles 78, and 83, item 1 of the Constitution, and according to the proposal of Council of Ministers, the Parliament of Republic of Albania passed the law no. 9154, of date 06.11.2003 "On Archives"

The mission of the Archives is connected directly with the term Archives, in the traditional meaning of this word, are such institutions where the wholeness of the documents is preserved, documents inherited by the most ancient times until now.



Nje flete nga doreshkrimi i Kavalliotit-2 te Akademitise Voskopojes

The records which are preserved in the State Central Archives of Albania, in Tirana, and in district archives, are all-inclusive regarding their origin, type, support, place and time of creation and in respect with information they have. The first record is dated as 6<sup>th</sup> century.

The mission of archives is to preserve this precious national heritage, to administer, manage it in a scientific and technical way, the compilation of the archival finding-aid, the constant enrichment of this heritage with records and fond of the different individuals, of the private entities that do exercise their activities in and outside the motherland, and especially of the institutions of the state central and local administration, and also of the national and international organizations, associations, and foundations, either governmental or non-governmental that act within the territory of the Republic of Albania

The Strategy of General Directorate of Archives can be summarized as follows:

1. Opening and continuous democratization of the national archival service so that it might be in service of the public.
2. Declassification of records of the fond of State Central Archives, and local state archives.
3. Enrichment of the national archival network under the supervision of the General Directorate of Archives.
4. The technical-scientific management of records deposited in State Central Archives, and local state archives.
5. Depositing of records on work experience to the regional directorates and social insurance.
6. The qualification of the workers of national archival net so that they administer and organize the technical-scientific management of the records of the fond-creator institution.
7. Publication and promotional activities.

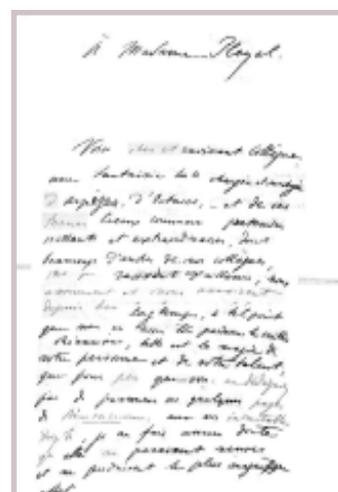
## SPECIAL TREASURES OF ALBANIAN ARCHIVES

### I. Liszt's authentic manuscript (letters and a score )

A set of original documents by the famous Austrian-hungarian composer Franz Liszt is preserved in the Central State Archive (CSA) in Tirana, since 1962. This stock is modest; in total it contains two files with a three page autobiography of Liszt, an authentic score, an 18-page translation, historical background, document delivery acts from a Shkodra family and other evidences. However, because of its valuable importance, Liszt's stock, with reference number 65, is preserved in a "chambre forte", together with the Albanian codices and other extraordinary valuables of the national archival treasure. Previously, the documents were a cultural patrimony of the Kolë Luka family, with several generations of this family having preserved them for over a century.

The arrival and preservation of Liszt's documents in Albania is a story as impressive as the name of their author, given their dramatic and at times endangered course. Kolë Luka, who knew Liszt and is credited for saving these documents from "kilogram sale" as paper used for cardboard, in their delivery to the Central State Archive, describes the hard trip of the score and of the two original letters of the great Austrian composer around the Albanian territory:

*"My grandfathers Shuk and Lukë Luka from Shkodra were merchants and traded with cities outside the country: in Ulqin, Gjakova, Prizren, Greece and Shëngjin. Shuk, who was the eldest brother, had a jewish friend, who traded antiquities. In exchange for a gift given by Shuk, the Jew gave him a book and the documents of F. Liszt, advising him to preserve them well, because they had great*



First page of Liszt's letter

value for the history of music. My father cannot remember the name of the Jew, but told me the following story of how the documents were found (original text in Albanian in Gheg dialect).

The two brothers died of cholera in Shëngjin. At that time, a strong epidemic had spread over many places killing many people, also because medical treatment was largely unavailable at the time. This happened 120 years ago.

As soon as they learned about their death, my grandmother together with her brother went to Shengjin (on horseback) and inside the shop they found only some trade papers, receipts, etc. All the stock was stolen and F. Liszt's documents were found inside a book amidst the documents brought to Shkodra.

The documents brought to Shkodra were given to a man to preserve them; he eventually sold some of the documents by kilogram, because he hadn't enough space to store them and also because he was ignorant of their value. We believe other valuable documents, some manuscripts, etc. might have been among these lost documents.

When I was a little boy in elementary school, I attended a painting course and I painted the portrait of F. Liszt. I knew he was a great and famous musician. When I took possession of the documents, I kept them in my textbooks intending to share them at a later time, when I met a musician or to hand them over to people who knew and appreciated their value.

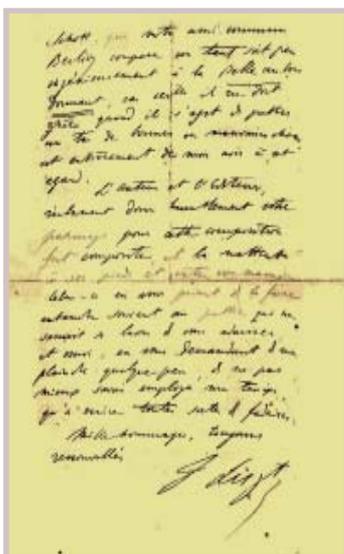
With due respect,

Kolë Luka

Shkodra, date 10/1/1963"

The original documents of Liszt which are preserved in the Central State Archive were brought to Albania, between 1842-1845. The same evidence tells us that quite by chance, the Luka grandfathers took possession of these documents, where they were saved in the time of cholera and store theft, and left aside by Kolë Luka as worthy writings, as account books, receipts and trade papers were sold by kilogram to another family from the town of Shkodra which had enough space to preserve them. Also quite by chance they were not sold to the Hungarian Embassy in Tirana, which "paid well" according to one of the documents. But all these "happenstances", which have always been looked upon with dignity, indicate that Liszt's work was well-documented in Albania.

Liszt's unknown score, in its artistic elaboration, is entitled "The fantasy". This title is found in a letter that the composer addressed to Madame Camille Pleyel. In fact, in the original text was



Original letter by Liszt

written in French, as “My fantasy”, giving the title a potential double meaning. The second meaning becomes more plausible when we consider that Liszt had also written a waltz with the same title, “The fantasy”, and it is not customary to expect a composer to use the same title twice.

The score consists only of a double paper, with a fine writing on the staff, with the same ink colour used for the letter sent to Mrs. Pleyel (Camille Pleyel). Music scholars have estimated that this score represents a musical exercise of Liszt, with a performance lasting two to three minutes.

Madam Pleyel is not a casual person in Liszt’s correspondence. At the time, Master Pleyel the woman’s father, when the letter was written (not later than 1845), was the chief organizer of the concerts of the greatest musicians in Paris, including Liszt. Master Pleyel was one of the most famous pianoforte manufacturers in Europe. The Pleyel family tradition continued to modern times. Nowadays, the famous “Pleyel” hall in Paris, which has promoted excellent composers, is preserved and functional.

In Liszt’s letter addressed to Mrs. Pleyel, it can be noticed that the two felt a strong friendship and mutual admiration. Liszt writing is stylish and gentle, reflecting the high fashion of the Parisian world. However, within this controlled and ornate style, strong feelings suddenly explode: discontent towards a group of new composers who experiment and “jangle the nerves”, the irony towards “compositions overly-composed”, Liszt’s own spiritual downfall, the confidence that his work could have a special value if played by the talented hands of Mrs. Pleyel, the plea not to abandon him (even: mercy and compassion for the author, who wants to give his work proper value), recalling into consideration for mutual friends like Berlioz and Schott:

*“To Mrs. Pleyel*

*Dear and graceful colleague, I am sending to you my “Fantasy” full of arpeggios, with octaves and all those ordinary and gloomy plays, seemingly excellent and extraordinary, with which many of our colleagues – who recently haven’t been graceful at all - being so raucous and frustrating for so long, strongly upsetting us.*

*Nevertheless, your persona and talent is so magical, that if you would be so kind as to play in the piano these few pages with reminiscences (borrowings) with your exceptional fingers, I am pretty sure they will seem new and will make the most excellent impres-*



Original music score  
by Liszt

sion.

*Schott, whom our mutual friend Berlioz compares craftily with "the sleeping beauty", because certainly he doesn't sleep at all when he needs to publish a pile of good and bad things, shares the same opinion on this issue.*

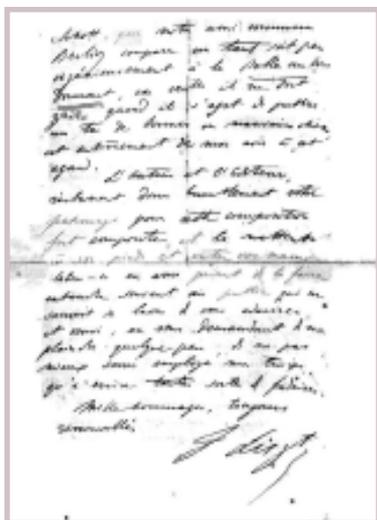
*The author and the publisher request, humbly, your patronage for this composition overly-composed (full of ornaments), present it to your feet and put it on your hands. The latter begs you to play the piano often for the public, which is never tired of admiring you, while I beg you to pity me for not knowing how to spend the time, but only writing all sorts of trivial things.*

*With never-ending deference,*

*Fr. Liszt'*

All documents cited in this writing, excluding those separately indicated, have the reference index: Central State Archive (CSA), Stock 65, File 1-2.

A limited number of Liszt scholars have noticed that his letter sent to Mrs. Pleyel, but which never reached the addressee, and when 160 years have passed from the time it was written, has the same spirit with the short composition "Fantasy". It's the same perturbing condition, with little experimenting whim "like the colleagues", with little self-reproach and a lot of sweetness.



Second page of Liszt's letter

The American researcher James Huneker, in his work "Chopin as a person and his music", republished in New York in 2001, compares Chopin's "Fantasy", a famous ballad composed for piano, with Liszt's "Fantasy", also famous, but totally different with its short musical piece that is preserved in the Central State Archive. According to Huneker, Chopin's ballad is logical and well composed. The American scholar views Chopin's "Fantasy" through the eyes and feelings of the famous pianist De Pachmann. According to the latter, the piece has a vertical composition, with a characteristic echo that is transmitted to the listener. "It's a storm full of emotions. The impact of this ballad reminds one of a tornado". While playing the "Fantasy", the virtuoso pianist was somehow confused and disorganized concerning the hue of the tones. "Franz Liszt, writes Huneker, said to Vladimir Pachmann that Chopin relied on his work for the composition of his "Fantasy". The first two parts of the "Fantasy" are characterized by a quick rhythm, which follows in Chopin's third and fourth parts, and could be easily titled with the French expression: "Entrez! Entrez!". "This can be repeated, until the doors are closed", - Liszt, George Sand, Madame Camille

Pleyel and others” have the same opinion (“The first two bars of the “Fantasie” describe these rappings, just as the third and fourth stand for Chopin’s musical invitation: Entrez,, Entrez! This is all repeated until the doors wide open swinging admit Liszt, George Sand, Madame Camille Pleyel née Mock, and others) - James Huneker, “Chopin as a person and his music”.

The comparison made by Huneker is important to communicate us that the “Fantasie” is a reference in order to understand Liszt’s music, because this title attracted him to other composers as well, with whom he liked to compare, and lastly, because the original letter that Liszt addressed to Madame Camille Pleyel is not a separate meeting point in the composer’s life, as they also shared the same opinion on another “Fantasie”, that of Chopin.

Through direct consultations with Austrian experts from the “Franz Liszt” Institute, including Prof. Schultz, one of the most knowledgeable scholars of the work of the great Austrian composer, the manuscripts of stock 65 have been re-evaluated these last years. These evaluations definitely prove that: 1. There is no doubt that Liszt’s letter for Mrs. Pleyel is an unknown original writing of this great musician. 2. There is no doubt that the other letter, addressed to “Mr. Spina”, is a totally unknown original writing of Liszt. 3. Regarding the score, it is thought that perhaps it is not Liszt’s handwriting, but the musical material leaves no doubt about his authorship. This is also based on the fact that there is no writing on the staff and it is thus difficult to prove who has written it by just looking at the notes.

The Austrian specialists specify that Pleyel has composed pieces as well. Some of them think that perhaps the score is transcribed by Mrs. Pleyel herself. But this hypothesis paves the way for other uncertainties: how did Liszt’s score arrive to Pleyel, why later she lost the letter, the score and many other questions. It will be difficult to separate where Liszt ends and Pleyel begins.

Liszt’s second letter is short. In its few lines, the reader comes to know a totally different aspect of his personality. It is not the Liszt who demands custody from a madam, like Mrs. Pleyel; it is not the Liszt who sees the real value of his works in the fingers of the talented pianist and the majority of the composers of that time; rather, it is a Liszt who recommends a young person to a highly influential friend of his, ensuring that this person, whose name remains unknown, “has a bright future ahead of him”. This young lad was never recommended to “Mr. Spina”, because the encouraging letter of master Liszt first ended up in the hands of a Hebrew, then in the hands of Luka family, and finally ending in the Central State Archive. Perhaps even without this letter, he became a man with a bright future! How can one know?! Perhaps the publication will serve as an invitation for scholars, in order to find who Spina and Heller really are, and thus be able to prove Liszt’s prediction. He doesn’t hesitate to humbly write to his old friend:

*“Allow me, dear Mr. Spina, to send you this letter, as an old friend of yours, and to especially recommend Mr. Heller, a boy with a bright future.*

*I would be very grateful for everything that you could do for him. I am convinced that you should trust my relationship with him from every possible viewpoint.*

*Dear Mr. Spina, please consider my old friendship and sincere loyalty,*

*F. Liszt”*

The Liszt Fund in Albania is evidence that of Albanian’s interaction with world cultures. It is aimed that in the near future Liszt’s manuscripts are registered in the most important program of UNESCO on cultural patrimony “Memory of the World”.

## **II. Unique phonodocuments of global value**

Phonodocumentation is one of the oldest traditions in the history of sound documentation in the world. At the Central State Archive (CSA), are preserved the Albanian phonetics, which include not only a fine collection of selected treasures of the human voice, but also its reproduction techniques, starting with cyllinders and large gramophones, to the newest equipment including digital records.

The CSA sound archive preserves phonetic evidences, about a century old now. This is 100 years of history of phonodocumentation in a terminological sense, because evidence older than this leading to such testimony can also be found in the archive. Some of this evidence dates back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has been recorded by Thomas Edison himself: They are mainly voices of the most distinguished personalities of that time.

Also belonging to the phonodocumentation “*Pre-history*”, preserved in the Central State Archive, are attempts to record in phonograph, realized in 1899 (aria “*L’eclat de rire*” from the opera “*Manon Lesco*”; “*O dolce concerto*” - Paer; “*L’etoile du nord*” - Meyebear); and also the attempts of 1901 (aria “*E uch lüften, die mein klagen*” from Wagner’s opera “*Lohengrin*”, the aria “*As a before God and thee*” from Tchoukovsky’s, “*Oprichnik*” and the aria “*Rachele, quand du seigneur*” from Halévy’s opera “*La Juive*”, recordings of the earliest phonographic studios of the world in Munich and Petersburg, respectively).

Rare treasures of the national phonetics fund are found scattered around, under the ownership of individuals and institutions. Gjergj Fishta reciting the “*Highland Lute*.”, Ahmet Zogu celebrating his wedding, Fan Noli in an amicable conversation in the last years of his life, Enver Hoxha speaking at the Peace Conference in Paris, have been

preserved to date, despite the perturbing courses of time.

The CSA discographic stock has its own history and peculiarity. This stock brings together rare values of the history of the Albanian voice with other extremely rare, unique global values.

In the early 1980's, the Albanian government received an odd request. A British citizen, who inherited a very rich collection of discs, wanted to donate it to the Albanian Central State Archive. Martin Moir sent his first letter expressing his will in 1981. By that year two events had occurred and the state authorities of the time were skeptical as to whether to accept this gift or not. First, a few months had passed since the time the Bank of Albania had received a cheque signed by the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. The cheque had the same value as the gold kept as a pledge by the *"trilateral commission"* following the *"Corfu Channel Incident"*. Although the specialists proved that the cheque was authentic and could be unconditionally cashed, Enver Hoxha considered it as a *"test of the West"* to see if Albania was facing economic difficulties following the severing of ties with China. The cheque was returned to the British government without any explanations. The second event was the suicide of Mehmet Shehu and the detention of his family in a high security prison, which, unfortunately, was located on the back side of the Central State Archive (CSA). Mehmet Shehu was accused of being a poly-agent, the British included, and it could be easily believed that the donor's intention was not to bring his collection to Albania, but to make use of the situation and survey the prison's location. The history of the efforts made by Martin Moir to persuade the Albanian authorities to accept the gift lasted three years, much longer than what it took the Greeks to convince the Trojans to accept the wooden horse as a token of their bravery and resistance. At last, in 1984, with the approval of the highest party and state leadership of that time, including Mrs. Nexhmije Hoxha, the collection was accepted and Martin Moir officially visited Albania. As a sign of gratitude, the gifts he accepted from the Albanian authorities included only a domestically-produced bicycle and the permission to walk alone in the main boulevard.

The history of the Albanian phonetics archive starts with one of the most famous voices of the world stage. On November 12, 1902, the *"Zonofon"* company produced disc limited copies containing operatic interpretations by the famous Italian tenor, and one of the greatest tenors of all times, Enrico Caruso. This sound archive contains also 7 original discs of this magical voice. The disc produced in 1902 is a unique copy and is preserved in the CSA sound archive.

It is a great privilege that this phonetics archive contains recordings of the piano performance of one of the most distinguished talents, the Frenchman Francis Plante. The disc containing Schumann's *"The prophet bird"* played by Plante is considered as a rare treasure of the world discography history. The same consider-

ation holds a vinyl recording of a violin concert of Brahms' played by Manke and conducted by Abrendroth, a dream-disc for voice collectors. The CSA phonetics archive preserves recorded pieces from Beethoven's composition conducted by a famous composer and conductor, Waisman, in 1917 in Paris, pieces that strangely enough have not been staged since.

Recreated discs have great value in the history of human voice as an art treasure; they contain recordings of Gregorian chorales (psalm 109-111), Church music of the early middle ages (from 11<sup>th</sup> century to the 13<sup>th</sup> century), Ambrosian and Byzantine hymns of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, three medieval songs belonging to the same period, Germanic chorales composed five centuries ago by Heinrich Finck and Church polyphony of the composer Orlando Lasso (16<sup>th</sup> century).

Treasures of the phonic (vocalic) stock in Albania have existed since the establishment of the archives. The stock of the Albanian vocal is chronologically connected with the first mass in Albanian, held by Monsignor Fan S. Noli in Boston in 1908, which is preserved in a reproduced form in 1978. Three original discs of the actor Aleksandër Moisiu, still unknown in the Albanian territory, are considered as the pride of this stock (playing Hamlet, Faust and Marquess Posa from Schiller's *"Don Carlos"*). The CSA preserves the oldest recording of the Albanian national anthem (1921). Classical voices of the Albanian song from Nestor Muko Himarioti, Tefta Tashko, Marije Kraja, Kristaq Antoniu, but also folk singers, like Hafize Leskoviku, Spiridon Ilo, Demka and Hajro, etc., stand as the pride of the phonetic archives. Many great names like Bela Bartok, Ernest Bloch, Claude Debussy, Sergei Prokofiev, Maurice Ravel, Sergei Rachmaninov, Dmitri Shostakovich are other treasures of the phonic (vocalic) stock preserved in the Albanian archives.

Phonodocumentation in Albania represents a gallery of treasures that can be reactivated in the country's cultural life. The CSA preserves voices of such heroes of human thought, like Leo Tolstoy (*"Que est que c'est la religion"*, 1907) and Albert Einstein (193?). The original voices of men like Lenin (1919), Adolf Hitler (1934), Chamberlein (1938), Churchill (1943), Mussolini (1938), Stalin (1937), De Gaulle (1958), Kennedy (1963) and many others are also part of this gallery. It's not by chance that the history of phonodocumentation in Albanian archives starts immediately after that of the Viennese Phonogram-archive, or that the photograph is presented in the Albanian territory less than 10 years after Lumière's invention.

### III. "Ottoman Sicil" like "curia romana"

The Sharia sicils of cities are primary sources of illuminating the path of how civilizations moved from the East towards Europe. The sicils are records, or, more precisely archives of the Ottoman

administration at the local level. But at the same time they are historical, juridical and administrative treasures, which bear evidence to the process of acquiring the values of the Islamic civilization in the Balkans, in that part of the Ottoman superstate, which the ex-empire itself called “*Rumeli*” - “*rom-ili*” - “*the land of roma*” – European Turkey.

Among the cities of the Albanian territory, the town of Berat or the “*Albanian Belgrade*”, as known by the Ottoman Empire, has the fullest version of the sicil. “*The Sharia Sicil of Berat*” is a comprehensive encyclopedia about the historical links, the exchanges and impacts certified in a centuries-long process between the Islam civilization and Albanian culture. Its many-thousand-page volumes contain copies of almost all official correspondence of the Empire’s central authorities in an effort to bring to this corner of the empire its will of power, especially that of the Sultan “*emperor and khalif*”. The typologies of most of these documents are: sultan decrees, certificates, ordinances, court decisions, orders, mandates, acts of foundation, imperial *hatti*’s, declarations, decisions, charges (accusations), testaments (wills). This typology indicates that the sicil contains mainly incoming documents. This was a well-known general and administrative rule of the former Ottoman empire: documents issued by central authorities were written on a single copy; this copy was sent to the region where the event had occurred or where an intervention from the central government was deemed necessary; the offices of the Kadi should copy the document verbatim and should confirm the message was received; while the original document was taken back to the central authorities.

The decrees of the empire’s central authorities were effective only after they were copied in the sharia register, the sicil. For this reason, the Kadi were highly authoritarian men, although they were not among the highest-ranking functionaries in the empire’s protocol. They were the first to receive the state news from the centre, including news about the most important personalities of local administration, who stood higher than them in hierarchy and protocol. The Kadi was the first person to learn the fate of provincial governors, mutesarifs, generals and commanders written in imperial decrees.

The “*Sharia Sicil of Berat*” is one of the most important registers containing authentic sources of documentation about the events, developments and protagonists of the history of Albania and the Balkans for about four centuries. This register, until some years ago, was estimated to have *192 volumes*, but later archival searches identified around *211 volumes*. It is thought that the archival stocks in the ottoman language still contain volumes belonging to this sicil and should be incorporated into it. This collection in the CSA is very useful not only for the orientalists, but also for the Albanian scholars, owing to the partial or complete translations of its acts from the experts of the old Turkish language.

This sicil contains not only the administrative correspondence between the empire's central authority and the country's authorities, but also information about everything important that has happened in this part of the world. The "*Sharia Sicil of Berat*" is an exceptional information source on the population, properties, development and concession of the right, appointing and dismissal of the administration functionaries, sentences and promotions, punishments and rewards, cultural and religious situation, the relationship between state right and ethno-cultural right, war and peace, uprisings and submissions, natural phenomena, epidemics, famine years, affluence years, miracles and wonders of the world, happenings and events. It provides information not only on the Albanian world, but also on a larger area, from Besaraby (Moldova), Poland, Russia, Great Britain, Venice to Gibraltar. *Eleni Duka* has published a short expository study on the values of this register.

The "*Sharia Sicil of Berat*" is written by hundreds of people, with different calligraphies, starting from 1603 and ending in 1923, in perfect chronological order. This archive is of exceptional value in that it enables the study of the functioning of a government with highly-syncretised powers, not only secular and religious powers, but also within secular powers themselves. Many decrees which have brought to this part of the empire the messages from the centre, intertwine the legislative power with the executive power and the concession of right. The decree was at the same time a decree-law, an order to be executed (enforced), and an injunction, from the viewpoint of the power of right.

In the current circumstances, when whole regions of the world are being rapidly reunited in federal structures, multi-nation states, with a multicultural, multireligious and multialphabetic character, the "*Sharia Sicil of Berat*", being integral in time and space, gains further importance, beyond the simple knowing of the history. The evidences recorded in this sicil are useful for scholars to study how nations not only ethnically, linguistically and genetically different, but also different concerning the demo-religious, demo-regional, and demo-cultural composition, had lived under the same roof, under the same absolute centralized power.

The administrative acts of the empire have specific value and are duplicated in "*Sharia Sicil of Berat*" on the rights of Christian communities, on the protection provided to them by law. A sultan decree of 1680 assigns the tax collection to *mitropolit Ignatios* in his jurisdiction. In another decree of the same time, the local authorities are ordered to release the occupied houses of the Christians living in the neighbourhoods of Mangalem and Gorica and also to repair the old churches (abbeys) of the city, allowing the priests to reconstruct them. A large number of ordinances of the imperial power reconfirm the appointment of the top functionaries of the Orthodox Church, appointed before by the church authority, as the case of the substitution of Berat town patriarch *Ignatios* with *Dionisis* (1845); appoint-

ment of clergyman *Jermanos*, Ohrid's patriarch (1647) and other similar appointments.

The imperial messages which are duplicated in "*Sharia Sicil of Berat*" are extremely diverse. The sultan decrees, certificates, hyxhetet and court decisions, orders and ordinances might bring messages related to the whole Balkan region, but also ordinary messages, for example, about the way of sharing the fortune in a family with internal conflicts or about assigning the amount of a shopkeeper daughter's dot (dowry). This is due to the fact that in the Ottoman Empire every citizen, regardless of the region where he lived, religious belief and own fortune, had the right to complain directly to the Sultan. The central administration of the former-empire was responsible to evaluate the complaints of the citizens and the sultan ordered that every conflict in a family should be solved with the same authority as for the solution of a quarrel between institutions or functionaries of local government. For this reason, the "*Sharia Sicil of Berat*", as well as sicil of other cities in Albania, contain innumerable sultan decrees (acts) which order the regulation of internal relations in a family, and not only those among state institutions; especially relations in large and rich families, but even those in poor families. The metropolis of the empire was attentive to every signal from its citizens. It was able to obtain information and intervene in the right time in academic and cultural discussions if these discussions were about public issues. As it is known, Berat city flourished as a centre of culture even in the period of the Albanian "*alhamiada*", which was literature with a syllabic alphabet. The rhymes of *Nazim of Frakulla* and his emulation with the country's mufti *mulla Ali* divided the city in two parts leading them to competition. The Ottoman Empire was very concerned about this, and sheh-ul-islam wrote the following letter to the local administration:

"Reputable (honorable) judge of Albanian Beligrad,

*After sending you our regards, I inform you that the mufti Ali of Albanian Beligrad has been dismissed from the duty of fatwa, as we have been informed that with his misbehaviour he has been involved in some issues, causing anarchy in the city. You must repeatedly order him to stay away and not get involved in issues of fatwa, starting from today. Vesselam*" ("*Haki Sharofi and his work*", Tirana 2000, p. 149).

Sultan decrees were not signed only by the sultans, but by other authorities as well. Certainly, they were signed by the insurgent functionaries, who managed to be out of the empire's control. A decree written by *Ali pashë Tepelena* states:

*"Directed to the rumë of the side of Berat, myzeqarë dhe vllëh grabovarë, hamlets (villages) and manors. I inform you that I appointed an epitrop to repair (reconstruct) the monastery of the old man Kozma. I helped with aspra and you should help as well accord-*

*ing to the instructions of the bishop, in order to reconstruct this monastery. Those who will not contribute will disappoint me and pay it double. Do what I order in this decree. Gjirokastër, on September 12, 1813”.*

Giving such important evidence of the political, social, customary and natural chronicle, the “*Sharia Sicil of Berat*” is like a databank. The chronicle in this sicil, having not only an official, ethnographic, informative, but also cultural and scientific character, thus sheds lights on some of the least known truths in the history of this city and even of a much larger area, almost in the whole Albanian territory. It provides detailed notes about the years of unexpected or surprising natural events, earthquakes and epidemics, sun and moon eclipses, the poverty and famine years, years when the harvest is wiped out from the “*grasshoppers flocks*”, years of premature (early) harvest, years of confusion of seasonal phenomena (snow in summer, winter-crop agricultural production during the spring).

There are some official acts which seem to contain useless information for the history. However, as a matter of fact, from the beginning they inform about a concern in the social life, such as an order of 1828, which bans wearing in public of precious clothes embroidered in gold and silver. Such document might have originated out of the will of the government to prohibit notable differences in people’s lives or due to the spreading of the expensive aristocratic clothes and use of precious metals in them. Only one register of *Sharia of Berat* that contains information on tariketet and trade preserved from the year 1170 Hegira and for almost 30 years contains notes about 454 arguments/subjects on different events belonging to this city.

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