

A Letter Concerning the Parents of Patrona Halil*

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Context

This document from the Muslim court registers of Rodosçuk or Tekfurdağı (modern-day Tekirdağ in Turkey) is a copy of a letter written to the court registers, which was sent to the deputy judge and the local notable of the city. It is about the parents of Patrona Halil who was believed to be the main culprit of the so-called Patrona Rebellion of 1730, a significant event in Ottoman history. Unfortunately, no further information is known regarding the final fate of the two people. The importance of the document comes from the fact that it reveals the details of the parents of Patrona Halil, an unknown aspect of the main figure of the 1730 Rebellion.

The rebellion was led by Patrona, an Albanian sailor who is believed to have been previously engaged in piracy. He became the leader of a group of janissaries, sailors, and various disaffected dwellers in Istanbul where widespread dissatisfaction with the rule of Sultan Ahmed III and his administration was evident. During the period, the economic difficulties were exacerbated by the luxury and extravagance of the so-called Tulip Era (*Lâle Devri*), during which there was significant spending on palaces and parties. Furthermore, failure in foreign policy, notably the loss of the war against Austria (1715-1718), which led to the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, was also a reason. With this treaty, the Ottoman Empire lost significant territories in the Balkans from which many displaced families poured mainly into the Ottoman capital.

In September 1730, the armed rebels seized control of Istanbul, exploiting the general discontent among the populace. The insurgents demanded the execution of several high officials whom they blamed for the state's poor governance. Consequently, Sultan Ahmed III was deposed on October 1, 1730, and replaced by his nephew Mahmud I. Also, several of Ahmed III's ministers and prominent figures were executed or exiled. Seeking to restore order and consolidate his power, the new sultan Mahmud I executed Patrona Halil and his main supporters in November 1730, barely two months after the rebellion. On top of this, given the strong suspicion towards Albanians in Istanbul in the post-Patrona period, the Ottoman authorities probably wanted to deliver a symbolic message too. As shown in the document, almost six

months after Patrona's execution, Patrona's parents were exiled from Istanbul, never to return. By their banishment, the authorities may have wanted to erase the legacy of Patrona from Istanbul.

Transcription

Şerī'at-şi'ār Tekfurtağı nā'ibi efendi zīde 'ilmuhū ve kıdvetü'l-emācid ve'l-a'yān Tekfur[ta]ğında Ağa olan Hāšekī Meḥmed Ağa zīde mecduhūya inhā olunur ki bundan aḳdem āstāne-i sa'adetde ref'-i livā-i 'iṣyān iden şaķilerūñ başları olan mağzūb-ı ilāhī ve mebjūz-ı zıllullāhī olmağın ḳatlı olınan Patrona dimekle ma'rūf şeḳāvet-piṣenūñ üvey babası Hālil ile anası Hāfşa nām avrat[uñ] İstanbul'da durmaları münāsib olmaduğundan ḫard u ib'ādaları mühimm ü muḳtezi olub vaḫan-ı aṣliyyelerine gitmek üzere Tekfurtağına nefy ü iclā olınmaları ile işbu mektūb taḫrīr ve kıdvetü'l-emāsil ve'l-aḳrān [Dergāh-ı 'ālī yeñiçerilerinden Şāhin Meḥmed Ağa] zīde ḳadruhū mübāşeretiyle irsāl olındı vuşūlünde gerekdür ki vaḫan-ı aṣliyyelerine gitmek üzere mezbūrlara gereği gibi tenbīh eyleyüb İstanbul ḫarafına 'avdet itdürmekden be-gāyet ihtirāz ve ictināb eylesesiz taḫrīren [fī] evā'il-i şehr-i Zī'l-ḳa'deti ş-şerīfe sene selāse ve erba'in ve mi'e ve elf vaşale ileynā ve ḳuyyide fī 8 Zī'l-ḳa'de sene 1143 mine'l-faḳīr Şāhin Meḥmed Ağa-yı Yeñiçeriyān-ı Dergāh-ı 'ālī

Translation

It is reported to the deputy judge of Tekfurtağı [Tekirdağ], the symbol of Shari'a – may [God] increase his knowledge – and the model of the most illustrious ones and of the notables, Hāšekī Meḥmed Ağa, who is an Ağa at Tekfurtağı – may [God] increase his glory – that since it is inappropriate for Hālil and Hāfşa, the step-father and mother of the bandit-natured man known as Patrona who was the leader of the insurgents who took the path of rebellion in the Abode of Felicity [İstanbul] before and was executed because of the wrath of God and grudge of the shadow of God, to remain in İstanbul, their deportation to Tekfurtağı is important and necessary. This letter was written and sent by the initiative of the model of the most honored ones and of his counterparts,

[Şâhin Meḥmed, Ağa of the Janissaries] – may [God] increase his power – after they were banished to Tekfurtağı in order for them to return to their original homeland. Upon the arrival [of the letter], warn them properly about their return to their original homeland and prevent them from returning to Istanbul. It was written in the first ten days of the month Zî'l-ka'de in the year 1143 (May 1731).

[The letter] arrived to us and registered at 8 Zî'l-ka'de 1143 (15 May 1731).

from humble Şâhin Meḥmed, Ağa of the Imperial Janissaries

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Facsimile

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