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Dissertation Conclusion

This dissertation presents the first systematic study of the subject of book ownership in Ottoman Sarajevo within the wider context of Bosnian Muslim written culture. It focuses on the period from 1118 to 1244 (AH) or 1707-1828 (CE).

The dissertation developed out of an initial study on a book collection endowed in 1244/1828 by Şālih 'Izzat Ḥromozāde, a kadi from Sarajevo. A review of the existing literature revealed how little had been written on the subject of book ownership in Ottoman Bosnia. The existing literature was limited in scope, either because it tended to focus on book owners from the 'ulamā' (scholarly class) or because it treated book ownership only in passing.

Given the identification of book ownership as a lacuna in the historiography on Ottoman Bosnia, this dissertation has attempted to answer the following three questions: what types of books Sarajevans owned, who the book owners were, and what the answers to these first two questions tell us about the place of the book in Bosnian culture between 1118/1707 and 1244/1828. The time frame was determined by the availability of sources and by the fact that the kadi Şālih 'Izzat Ḥromozāde collection was endowed in 1244/1828, the *terminus ad quem*.

Following the lead given by book ownership studies for a number of other Ottoman-era cities, the dissertation relies on inheritance inventories (*qassām daftars*) recorded in court registers (*sijills*) as the main *quantitative* source of information about books and their owners. More than 3,000 inheritance entries recorded in 59 Sarajevo court registers have been examined, with full awareness of the limitations they pose. One set of limitations concerns the people whose estates are recorded in the inheritance lists, the other the type of books that tend to be listed in them.

The main limitation of the first type is that inheritance inventories reveal only book owners whose estates were subject to judicial settlement. This leaves an unknown number of book owners outside the inventories. Even in cases where an estate registered in the inventories included no books, it does not necessarily follow that the deceased had not owned any books during his or her lifetime. The case of kadi Şālih 'Izzat Ḥromozāde, whose estate is not registered in the inventories, is a clear example.

Another limitation concerns the fact that the inheritance records are not representative of the population as a whole. Most of the registered book owners are male, Muslim and *‘askeri* (political taxpayers). On the other hand, the inventories do enable us to learn something about the role played by books in the lives of people where their existence would otherwise remain unregistered as such. This includes women, craftsmen and villagers.

When it comes to the books registered in the inventories, it is not uncommon for them to be listed under generic terms, like *kitāb* (book), *kutub* (books) *majmū‘a* (bound collection of texts) or *risāla* (treatise), etc. One of the most striking examples of this is an entry in one inventory for 400 or so otherwise unspecified “books.”¹¹⁹² This is far from the only one, however.

Books are also entered under a general descriptive rubric, eg. *tārīkh* (history), *lughat* (dictionary), *ṭibb* (medicine), etc. This makes it difficult to determine more fully or accurately the subject of the books within various genres.

The inheritance inventories were recorded in the Ottoman Turkish language using the Arabic script. Perhaps as a result, they show signs of bias against other traditions of literacy. Titles and subject are almost never given for books in the estate of Christians and Jews. Moreover, we know from other sources that Bosnian Muslims continued to use Cyrillic throughout the Ottoman period. Apart from early funerary inscriptions, however, its use does seem to have been confined to diplomatic and private correspondence. At the very least, we can confirm that the Sarajevo estate inventories provide no evidence of any books written in Cyrillic.

Despite these limitations and biases, the inheritance inventories nonetheless constitute a major source for understanding book ownership. They are also useful for the evidence they provide on the material culture of reading and writing, as they often list pens, pen-holders, ink, ink-holders, paper, writing boards, reading pointers, and similar artefacts. They remind us that, in early modern Ottoman Bosnia, the written word was encountered not only on pages of books, but also in the form of calligraphic pieces, amulets, jewellery, seals, and icons.

¹¹⁹² S55/193-194 (5 Jumādā al-Awwal 1230/15 April 1815).

The present study has sought to address the problem of these limitations by employing additional sources of book ownership, which add perspective to the information collected from the inventories. Marginal notes, ownership seals, book lists and endowment charters all represent important sources for book ownership. Systematically collecting and examining all the evidence on book ownership from, for example, ownership statements found on the pages of extant manuscripts would be a huge undertaking, well beyond the scope of the present dissertation, particularly given its focus on inheritance inventories. Consequently, this study has restricted its treatment to demonstrating the potential of such additional sources by including a chapter on the life of kadi Şālih ‘Izzat Ḥrōmozāde as a case study of a Sarajevo book owner and book donor’s life. His biography has been reconstructed on the basis of a variety of documents: his endowment charter, documents from the court protocols, archival documents and the notes found on the extant books from his collection. As a result it is now possible to situate his collection within the wider findings on Sarajevo’s book owners for the period 1118/1707 – 1244/1828. Thus, compared with other book collections registered in the inventories, kadi Şālih ‘Izzat Ḥrōmozāde’s collection was relatively large, but not exceptional. The same goes for the type of works contained. His collection seems quite representative of such book collections turned into endowments from the late Ottoman period of Bosnian history. Certainly, the information gleaned from the pages of his books confirms the potential of such extant book collections as a source for future book ownership studies.

Another concern was to contextualize book ownership by addressing larger questions of the written word in Ottoman Sarajevo: literacy, education, the use of different scripts and languages, the role of scribes, book binders, the introduction of print, informal modes of acquiring knowledge, and the place of the written words in a predominantly oral society.

In the absence of pre-existing scholarly treatment of most of these subjects, the present study relies on the major narrative source for Sarajevan history in the period from 1159/1746 to 1219/1804-5, namely *the Chronicle* of Mulla Muştafā Basheskī. As with kadi Şālih ‘Izzat Ḥrōmozāde, the Sarajevo inventories contain no entry for Basheskī, underlining their limitations as a representative source. Basheskī chronicled life in Sarajevo, including the intellectual scene as viewed by a minor Bosnian religious scholar (*‘ālim*) and scribe. His circle of associates included other scholars, poets and at least one librarian (Gharībī al-ḥāj Aḥmad-afandī), whom he describes as a man who “bequeathed many books,” but whose

estate does not figure in the inventories, once again underscoring the need for multiple sources in approaching book ownership. Basheskī allows us to access something of the flavour of life in Sarajevo, with his comments on other people's proficiency in Arabic, Turkish and Persian, their intellectual proclivities and their ideological sympathies, with a particular focus on the conflict between the *ḳadizādelis* and Sufis, as well as, albeit obliquely, his own spiritual and intellectual growth. What makes Basheskī's *Chronicle* so useful is the rich anecdotal evidence it offers on educated people, learning and books. It is, however, a qualitative, not a quantitative source. *The Chronicle* thus complements the inheritance lists, in giving us a sense of the world of written culture as seen through the eyes of a minor provincial religious functionary and a professional scribe in the most important city of Ottoman Bosnia. It fills in certain blanks about aspects of book culture, including such informal channels of learning as the *ḥelvā ṣoḥbeti*.

Nonetheless, invaluable though these *written* sources are, in the form of inheritance inventories, extant book collections (kadi Şāliḥ 'Izzat Hromozāde) or narrative sources (Basheskī's *Chronicle*), they tell us little about how the predominantly *oral* society of 12th/18th and 13th/19th century Bosnia understood writing and books. For this reason, this dissertation also includes a chapter on references to written culture in Slavic vernacular oral poetry and in customs which employ books, notably the Qur'an.

This dissertation examines these oral sources and oral vernacular poetry with a view to exploring some of the ways this predominantly oral society may have conceived of writing in general and of books in particular. The most common references to writing relate to letter writing and the presentation of official documents by messengers, followed by charms and talismans. Less common are references to scripts and actual books. Learning is, however, clearly prized and there are occasional references to literate women.

In addition to this, a number of folk customs centring on the book as a material object suggest the different functions books could serve. They were not used only for reading, copying, borrowing, and teaching or as object to be bought, sold or donated. They were also made use of to mark important phases in the life-cycle, including birth, marriage, and death, as well as to mark the seasons. Such oral and folklore sources underline the need to draw on multiple sources in studying a given book culture.

It is now possible to draw a number of conclusions on these grounds.

Firstly, Muslim book owners formed the great majority of book owners registered in the Sarajevo inventories and nearly all their books belonged to the wider Ottoman Muslim book culture. Insofar as the books are identifiable by title or author, they are works from the same Ottoman scholarly and literary canon as is found in other parts of the Ottoman world. In line with this, they were written in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian. Knowledge of these languages was the precondition for participating in the Muslim book culture of the Ottoman period. Vernacular texts continued to be produced, but not as scholarly works.

This fact that the books owned by Muslim Sarajevans belonged to the broader Ottoman culture of the book should come as no surprise, given that Sarajevo was founded in 1462 as an Ottoman settlement and this was the basis on which it grew so quickly to become a major political, commercial and cultural centre. Whether as a necessary tool required for the various religious and educational institutions, like *maktabs*, *madrasas*, *takkas*, and libraries, to function or as a resource deployed by individual owners in study, personal amusement, as donations or in some professional capacity, e.g. by bookbinders, scribes, or booksellers, books were part of the history of Sarajevo right from the city's inception. This link is personified by the city founder, Isa-bey Ishaković, albeit indirectly through his relationship to another city. Ishaković is known to have donated books to a mosque and *madrasa* in Skopje (Macedonia). In Sarajevo itself, he built a mosque and the first *takka* and was simply the first in a series of Ottoman administrators and generals to act as patrons of education and learning. Here, as in the other parts of the Ottoman Balkans, charitable foundations played a vital role in the introduction and spread of the new book culture. In addition to the mosques, *takkas*, and *madrasas*, which all needed books to perform their basic functions, there were two purpose-built libraries erected in Sarajevo in the 12th/18th century: the 'Uthmān Shahdī and Qanṭamīrīzāde libraries. While such support from rich and powerful Ottoman officials was important for the development of Sarajevo into the leading city of Ottoman Bosnia, one should not, however, overlook endowments made by people of modest means. Giving a book is a relatively simple way of making a religiously meritorious donation. In some cases, entire book collections were donated, as with kadi Ṣāliḥ 'Izzat Hromozāde. Sarajevo was no different in this regard from other Ottoman cities, in whose cultural and economic development as urban centres endowments played a critical role.

To the extent that we can identify the language they were written in, the vast majority of the book registered in the inventories seem to have been in Arabic, Turkish or Persian. In two cases, however, the language is given as “the language of Greece.” The only other case where language was specified involves a translation into “the language of Bosnia” of Birkawī’s *Risāla*, a popular religious primer, originally written in Arabic, by Muḥammad Pīr Birkawī (d.981/1571). The book in question was registered to the estate of a Sarajevan woman in 1225/1810. This is the sole, but important evidence of a translation of this work into the vernacular and it complements what we know about similar translations on the basis of extant manuscripts.

This translation into the Bosnian vernacular raises the question of the role of the various languages used in writing different types of text. To the extent that the language of books registered in the inventories is specified, it is clear that the role of Ottoman Turkish translations of works originally written in Arabic and Persian has been overlooked in scholarship on Ottoman Bosnia. This is a promising area for future study, based on extant manuscripts.

The vernacular was used for dictionaries, didactic poetry and translations of religious primers originally written in Arabic. The script employed for vernacular translations was however still Arabic. Such texts seem to have become more common from the 12th/18th century on, but this might simply reflect a higher survival rate for later manuscripts. It is perhaps significant that of two Bosnian Muslim scholars we know to have written in the vernacular (mainly poetry), one was exiled (Qā'imī, d. 1091/1680) and the other put to death ('Abd al-Wahhāb Ilhāmī, d. 1236/1821). Their use of the vernacular may well have been a major factor behind the Ottoman authorities' decision to stifle their voices. The vernacular was probably also used in personal correspondence, which, however, falls outside the scope of our study.

The inheritance inventories also mention a translation of the *Psalms*, presumably into Turkish. That the owners of the aforementioned books in the “language of Greece” and of the translation of the *Psalms* were Muslim men offers some, albeit slight evidence of an interest in the culture and religion of “the other.” These examples of such an interest among literate Sarajevans perhaps gain weight from Basheskī’s inclusion of what he called “Indian,” “Serbian,” and “Italian” alphabets in his *Chronicle*, along with a few words from each of these languages. Basheskī also refers to a Sarajevan Muslim who knew the

“language of the Jews,” another person who had learned Russian while in captivity, and a Sarajevo Christian who knew Greek.

Very few books in the inventories are described as printed (*başma*) and all of those that are belonged to the estates of Muslims. We cannot know for sure whether printed books were always noted as being such, but the available evidence does suggest that the vast majority of books in the inventories were manuscripts. In case of kadi Şāliḥ Ḥromozāde collection all the extant books of his collection are in manuscript, as the sole printed book (a dictionary) appears to have been added to the collection after the donor’s death. In other words, the Bosnian Muslim book culture of the period remained very much a manuscript culture. Basheskī does make a single reference to what appears to have been a newspaper. No additional evidence has been found to corroborate that interpretation.

In order to place what we have learned about Sarajevo book owners in perspective, we compared our findings with those for a number of other Ottoman cities, namely Damascus (1686-1717), Sofia (1671-1833), Trabzon (1795-1846) and Salonica (1828-1911). The Sarajevo records reveal a higher percentage of book owners relative to the overall number of inheritance entries, as well as a higher percentage of women owners. The estates of female book owners in Sarajevo also had larger book collections than those from the other four cities. In general, we find larger book collections registered in the estates of Sarajevans than in the other four cities. These figures and percentages must be interpreted in light of the fact that the other studies were not, for the most part, based on the systematic examination of inheritance entries over a long period of time, but on a limited selection of entries. The exception in this regard is Orlin Sabev’s study for Sofia, which, in fact, shows the closest results to those for Sarajevo. The main problem with these studies is that the authors have each taken different approaches to assessing book ownership on the basis of inheritance inventories. In the absence of a more unified set of parameters, it is difficult to draw more far-reaching conclusions. On the other hand, the findings for Sarajevo book ownership will facilitate comparative studies in future, given the systematic approach and the period covered.

As to subject matter, most of the books were copies of the Qur'an, the *En'ams*, and religious primers, especially the *Risāla* by Birkawī and the *Risāla* by Uşūwānī. Next in popularity were books on jurisprudence, various aspects of Arabic linguistics and grammar, and dictionaries for Arabic, Turkish and Persian. The inheritance entries also reveal a

considerable interest in history and literature. The sciences accounted for relatively few books, in comparison. In other words, most books were for religious use (e.g., “reading” the Qur’an and devotional texts in Arabic like the *Dalā’il* and *Qaṣīdat al-burda*, and *Mawlid*, probably in Turkish) or acquiring knowledge of religion (religious primers). Many books listed in the inheritance records served as textbooks for *maktab* and *madrassa* education.

Turning to works by Ottoman scholars of Bosnian origins, the inheritance records suggest that the works of Aḥmad Sūdī al-Būsawī, a commentator on the Persian classics, were the most commonly represented. His case shows the usefulness of inheritance records in determining the spread and influence of certain works and authors.

The value of books listed in the inheritance inventories seems to have ranged greatly, from modestly-priced religious primers and *madrassa* textbooks to luxurious copies of the Qur’an, generally the most expensive books. The price of two copies of one and the same work could vary by a factor or as much as ten, no doubt reflecting the quality and condition of the volumes in question. Apart from copies of the Qur’an, some works of jurisprudence also rank among the most valuable books and were comparable in price to some of the most expensive movable items such as jewellery, weapons, bridal ornaments for horses and clocks. The low price range of some books no doubt contributed to their affordability and wider diffusion.

With regard to book owners in the inheritance inventories, the most important finding is that book ownership does not seem to have been limited to a particular social stratum. Books are to be found in the estates of peasants and city dwellers, men and women, the rich and those with modest estates, and both those whose professions were book-oriented (especially the ‘*ulamā*’) and others e.g. artisans and merchants. In fact, some of the largest book collections belonged to the artisans and merchants of Sarajevo. The proportion of book owners in different sections of society varied. While book owners in the inventories tended to be male, Muslim town-dwellers, and either ‘*ulamā*’ or merchants and artisans, women nonetheless accounted for one third of all book owners. On the other hand, they tended to have only one book, usually a copy of the Qur’an. There were, nonetheless, four Muslim women with medium-sized book collections ranging in size from 22 to 63 works. There was a single Muslim male Roma book owner, entered in the inheritance records with a copy of the Qur’an.

There are three Jewish book owners listed in the inheritance inventories, one of them female, as well as fifteen Christian book owners, all male. Books in the estates of Jews and Christians are described as “Jewish books” or “books of the Christians” and are never listed by title or author. In one case, however, books in the estate of a Jewish man are given as “a doctor’s books,” perhaps indicating the subject matter. Nor is the language of books in the estates of Jews and Christians indicated or any indication given as to whether they were printed. This is indicative of the bias in the Sarajevo inheritance inventories against books that fell outside the mainstream of Ottoman Muslim book culture.

As for Muslim book owners, we have already noted that most of the works they owned were written in Arabic, Turkish or Persian and that some knowledge of these languages was therefore a precondition for participating in Ottoman Bosnian book culture. While the wide diffusion of books across social strata shows that books were in principle available to everyone, the fact that they tended to be overwhelmingly in Arabic, Turkish or Persian meant that they were really only useable by the minority capable of reading these languages. Basheski’s comments provide some indication on how proficient in these languages various Sarajevans of his acquaintance actually were. He shows that mastery of these languages was not limited to the ‘*ulamā*’ and included both merchants and artisans.

Although written in Ottoman Turkish, Basheski’s *Chronicle* includes material in the Slavic vernacular in the form of stories, poems and riddles. This is a reminder of the numerous interfaces of the written and the spoken, between the languages of learning (Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian) and the Sarajevo population’s Slavic vernacular. The present study has documented references to written culture in oral poetry, shedding a certain amount of light on how a predominantly oral society perceived written culture. The examples taken from two major collections of oral poetry show the impact of the written culture on oral culture and the high premium set on the knowledge and learning of languages, even among females. The relatively common references to written culture in oral poetry undermine the notion about a dichotomy between “elite” culture in foreign languages and “popular” culture that ran separate courses.

Folk beliefs and customs which revolve around the written word in general and the book in particular (usually the Qur’an) underscore the wide variety of uses books had even in a predominantly oral society.

The findings of this study confirm a wide diffusion of books in Ottoman Sarajevo and their availability. Books had multiple purposes. They were owned, written, copied, bound, decorated, read, studied, translated, donated, borrowed, bought, sold, exchanged, inherited, imported, used for divinatory purposes. They could be the subject of litigation, while their loss in times of war was mourned in poetry.

In addition to the mosques, maktabas (elementary schools), madrasas (higher schools), takkas (Sufi lodges) and libraries, Ottoman Sarajevo's vibrant cultural life was to be seen in such informal settings as those of the coffee houses and private gatherings for prayer, reading and discussion (*ḥelvā ṣoḥbeti*).

The experience of travel for business, pilgrimage or education, even warfare, could serve as conduits for knowledge of learning. Indeed, late 12/18th and early 12th/19th century Sarajevo was a city in which a blacksmith or even a woman could also be a Qur'an copyist, while the head of the cobblers' or bookbinders' guild could be commended for his proficiency in Turkish, a slave boy could aspire to learning Persian, a Muslim could be interested in learning the "language of the Jews," a Jewish lady left a "Jewish book" in her estate, a mendicant Jewish doctor might carry his books around with him, and a rich Christian merchant might own a large collection of "Christian books."

By bringing together information from a variety of sources, written and oral, the present study offers a comprehensive and more contextually informed account on book ownership than has been the case so far. It fills an important gap in our knowledge about Bosnian cultural history of the Ottoman period. It enables us to situate Bosnian book culture within the wider context of the Ottoman lands, while remaining alert to the local context and peculiarities. As such it breaks new ground in the historiography of Ottoman Sarajevo and opens the way for similar studies for other Bosnian towns and cities in future.