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The Catholics and Organ Disagreements in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Kamame Kilisesi'nde Org Tartışmaları ve Katolikler

ABSTRACT

Since the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has a very important place in Christianity, every Christian denomination has wanted to be in control of the place. This has led to violation of each other's rights and a series of disputes and fights between the concerned sects. These disputes and fights have generally broken out among Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Catholic Latin communities. The Ottoman administration used to proclaim the rights on the Church they granted to these religious communities by issuing edicts. Thus, they not only protected their rights but also prevented disputes from arising. The fact that Catholics wanted to install an organ in the Church in the 19th. Century led to disputes among Greek and Armenian churches. Since this was not an old problem, it was not resolved by edicts but by deciding to go on using the organ as it had been used before. After the issue was resolved, the Catholics installed a second big organ in the Church and rekindled the old disputes. This study gives information on the rights and number of the Catholic community in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and deals with the disputes regarding the organ they want to install in the Church. Also, the solution the Ottoman Administration found for the organ problem and their attitude towards the problem are dealt with in this study.

Keywords: Jerusalem, Catholics, Greeks, Church Organ, The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

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«This study deals with Catholics in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the disputes regarding a big organ (Organum/Erganun) Catholics want to install in the Church according to Ottoman archive documents. Also, what rights Catholics have in the Church, their numbers and a few issues that create tensions among other communities are discussed»

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ÖZET

Kamame Kilisesi Hristiyanlıkta çok önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bundan dolayı her Hristiyan cemaati buraya sahip olmak istemiştir. Bu sahip olma isteği birbirlerinin hakkına müdahale etmelerine sebep olmuş olup, mezhepler arasında bir dizi tartışma ve kavgayı da beraberinde getirmiştir. Tartışma ve kavgalar özellikle Rum Ortodoks, Ermeni ve Katolik Latin cemaatleri arasında meydana gelmiştir. Osmanlı Devleti kilisede tasarruf hakkı verdiği cemaatlere tanıdığı hakları fermanlar ile ilan etmiştir. Bu şekilde cemaatlerin haklarını korumakla kalmamış, ortaya çıkan tartışmaları da bu fermanlara göre çözmüştür. 19. yüzyılda Katolikler kiliseye büyük bir org yerleştirmek istemeleri Latin, Rum ve Ermeni kiliseleri arasında tartışmalara sebep olmuştur. Bu org tartışması eski bir mesele olmadığı için fermanlara göre çözülmemiş ancak eskiden ne şekilde kullanılıyorsa yine aynı şekilde kullanılmasına gidilerek tartışma giderilmiştir. Tartışmanın giderilmesinden sonra Katolikler ikinci defa kiliseye büyük bir org yerleştirerek tartışmayı yeniden gün yüzüne çıkarmışlardır. Bu çalışmada Kamame Kilisesi'nde Katolik cemaatinin hakları ve sayıları hakkında bilgi verilerek, kiliseye yerleştirmek istedikleri org için ortaya çıkan tartışmalar ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca Osmanlı Devleti'nin cemaatler arasında ortaya çıkan bu org meselesinde nasıl bir çözüm yolu bulduğu ve tartışmalar karşındaki tavrı ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kudüs, Katolikler, Rumlar, Kilise Orgu, Kamame Kilisesi

Introduction

Jerusalem is regarded sacred in three monotheist religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each religion attributes sanctity to the city according to their tenets and bases it on certain historic events. Jews traces the origins of sanctity and eternity to David and Solomon since the city's name for the first time is referred to in Torah. Muslims consider the city to be sacred because of the fact that it was their first qibla, the Prophet Muhammad's night journey took place here and the city and its environs contained graves and tombs of many prophets. Lastly, Christians regard the city as sacred because Jesus Christ was born, preached Christianity, was crucified and buried and ascended to heaven here¹.

Within the walls of Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (referred to in the Ottoman document as *Kamame Church*) is the place Christians revere the most. They believe the Church was built on the hill where Jesus was crucified and buried. After converting to Christianity, Emperor Constantine (272-337) orders a church to be built on this hill. Although when the church was built is disputed, its construction probably started

1 Türkaya Ataöv, "Kudüs ve Devletler Hukuku", *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, XXXV/1, Ankara 1980, p. 29; Abdullah el-Khatip, "Kur'an'da Kudüs", *Fırat Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Translated: Ramazan Işık, IX/1, Elazığ 2004, pp. 110-111; Yitzhak Reiter, Marlen Eordegian and Marwan Abu Kalaf, "Jerusalem's Religious Significance", *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture Jerusalem*, VIII/1, Jerusalem 2001, p. 15.

soon after Queen Helena visited Jerusalem in 326 A.D. As a matter of fact, there are sources claiming that the construction of the church started in 326 A.D. where Jesus was crucified and buried, and was dedicated to his memory in 335 A.D.².

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has a very important place in Christianity. It became the subject of controversy after especially the Great Schism of 1054 and the place where a struggle of control has always taken place. The disputes regarding the Church did not take place between Christians and Muslims, but Christian sects, especially Greek, Armenian and Catholic Sects. Sacred parts of the Church were assigned to different sects in order to stop disputes and fights between Christian sects in the period when Jerusalem was under Ottoman rule. We cannot claim that this division began during the Ottoman rule. It can be traced back to the Council of Chalcedon when monophysitism emerged. Because, the adherents of this faith were banished from sacred places during the Justinian I (527-565) rule. This banishment lasted until the conquest of Jerusalem in 638 by Muslims³.

The Church was divided between Christian sects in a very detailed manner. Each sect was assigned a particular place for conducting their rites and some parts were designed for common rituals. This arrangement was protected by edicts for years.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was divided between six communities: Greeks, Catholics, Armenians, Assyrians, Copts, and Abyssinians. However, it must be stated that this division was not an equitable one. Important parts of the Church were left to Greeks, Catholics and Armenians and the other communities were given a few less important places. Each community tried to expand and enlarge the place that was put in their trust. And, this of course led to serious fights in the Church. For instance, the Franciscan Father Custodian showed the wound on his arm that a Greek priest inflicted in a fight that broke out between Greeks and Catholics to the Englishman Henry Maundrell and his friends who were visiting the Church⁴. This shows the extent to which fights between two communities can go.

There are a lot of controversial issues among these sects in the Church. This study deals with Catholics in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the disputes regarding a big organ (*Organum/Erganun*) Catholics want to install in the Church according to Ottoman archive documents. Also, what rights Catholics have in the Church, their numbers and a few issues that create tensions among other communities are discussed.

The Catholic Rights and Populations

While many places in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were distributed among Greeks, Armenians and Catholics, a few places were given to Assyrian, Coptic and

- 2 Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land-An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*, New York 2008, p. 50; Colin Marris, *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West (From the Beginning to 1600)*, New York 2005, p. 38.
- 3 Oded Peri, *Christianity under Islam in Jerusalem: The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times*, Leiden-Köln 2001, p. 42.
- 4 Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans-The Church and the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press 1983, p. 214.

Abyssinian communities. Although Ottoman archives contain documents that show these assignments, there are also a lot of edicts that were issued to community leaders. The edicts given to Greeks and Armenians were issued to Jerusalem Greeks and Armenian Patriarchs and indicate the rights and exemptions they were granted in the Holy Places. The first and detailed edicts issued to Dorotheos (*Attalia*), Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and Sarkis, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, were given by Selim I (1512-1520)⁵. Although Mehmet II (1444-1446, 1451-1481) gave an edict to Greek Orthodox Patriarch Athanasios of Jerusalem, before Selim I, Jerusalem had not been conquered yet and it contained less significant rights compared to those in the edict issued by Selim I⁶.

The edicts that specified the rights of Catholics were generally issued to resident Catholics priests. Of the investigated documents, the oldest one the Catholics acquired from the Ottoman administration dates back to 1635/6 (Hijri 1045). After this date, the Catholics priests were issued edicts in 1689, 1690, 1691, 1692, 1698, 1718/9, 1742, 1756, 1810 and 1843. These edicts not only indicate the rights granted to them but also give information about the disputes they had with other communities⁷.

Although the documents that indicated the rights of the communities specified the sharing of places in a very detailed manner, conclusive extents of their rights were not provided. Especially, the places of common use were not clearly defined, because the edicts issued to each community indicated that a certain place was put only in their trust. For instance, the Stone of Unction (*Hacerü'l-Muğtesil*) where Jesus was washed and baptized before burial was assigned to a different community in each edict. In such cases, the place in question should be thought of as a place of common usage rather than looking for an incongruence.

The northern wing of the Church was used as the administrative center of the Latin Patriarchy during the reign of the Crusaders. This complex had survived until the time of the Ottomans as a Franciscan chapel and a chapel memorializing the Apparition. This monastery and some places around the chapel were left to Catholics' trust. Also, Chapel of St. Mary of Egypt that is situated in the east side of the Church and the Chapel of Invention in the south-east side of the Church belong to the Catholics⁸. In addition, the candles hanging from the great arch, the upper side and underneath of the arch called St. Mary (*Sitt-i Meryem*) belong to them. They also have the right to hold mass and candles and chandeliers in a place called *salput* in Golgotha/Calvary⁹.

The chandeliers in the Stone of Unction that is found in the entrance of the Church were divided among communities. According to Cust, 4 of the 8 candles in the Stone of Unction belong to the Greeks, 1 to the Catholics, 2 to the Armenians and 1 to the Copts¹⁰

5 Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (Hereafter BOA), The Church (Kamame) Registers (Hereafter A.DVNS.KLS.d.), Register No:9, pp. 7, 60-61.

6 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, p. 6. For detailed information on this subject, see Ralph S. Hattox, "Mehmed the Conqueror, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Mamluk Authority", *Studia Islamica*, No. 90, 2000, pp. 105-123.

7 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, pp. 172-180.

8 Oded Peri, *The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times*, pp. 6, 36.

9 BOA, A.DVN.KLS.d., Register No:9, p. 175.

10 L. G. A. Cust, *The Status Quo in the Holy Places*, Jerusalem 1980, p. 19.

. However, according to Balcı, 4 of the 8 candles in the Stone of Unction belong to the Greeks, 2 to the Catholics, 1 to the Armenians and 1 to the Assyrians¹¹.

In 1870, the Catholic priests requested from the Ottoman administration the empty quarters between the Church and the hangah (an in that provides free meals and lodging to students and the poor) belonging to Salah al-Din Foundation in order to expand their territory, stating that they would pay sixty thousand piasters to the Foundation. The Ottoman administration accepted their request and some of the territory that belongs to the hangah was given to the Catholics on the condition that they would not construct any buildings and the amount to be paid to the foundation would be raised to 90 thousand piasters. Thus, the Catholic priests were able to expand the territory put in their trust¹².

The communities that had a right to the Church reside within the Church and will not leave their posts until their replacements arrive. For example, the priests whose task it is to protect the Franciscan Chapel are known never to leave their posts until other priests take their stead. Even, their food is brought from other monasteries. Since the gates of the Church are closed at all times except religious ceremonies and rituals¹³, the food that is brought from outside is taken inside through the small opening on the gate. Franciscan priests' food was daily brought from the Savior Monastery. Some of the travelers that visited Jerusalem provide information about the number of the Catholic priests in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Visiting Jerusalem in 1814, Light reports that 12 priests, 3 from each major community, live in the Church. Munro, on the other hand, states that there were 12 Catholic, 12 Armenian, 15 Greek and 2 Copt, a total of 41, priests that managed the Church during the Egyptian administration. Pardieu reports that 6 Catholic priests rotating every three months lived in the Church. Lastly, Taylor reports in 1855 that there were 13 priests always protecting the Franciscan Chapel in the Church¹⁴.

Disagreements between Catholics and Greeks, and Catholics and Armenians

There are various reasons behind the disputes among Catholics, Greeks and Armenians in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. However, these reasons can be grouped under three categories according to the Ottoman archive documents. These include the disputes regarding the rites conducted in the Church, the restorations to the Church and

11 Kerim Balcı and Aykut İnce, *Kutsallığın Başkenti Kudüs*, İstanbul 2012, p. 196.

12 BOA, İrade Hâriciye (Hereafter İ.HR), Document No: 242/14384, 22 Haziran 1286/4 July 1870; BOA, İ.HR, Document No: 245/14571, 23 Rebiyü'l-âhir 1287/23 July 1870. For more information, see İhsan Satış, "Tanzimat Döneminde Kudüs ve Çevresinde Avrupalı Devletlerin Nüfuz Mücadelesinden Bir Kesit: Hristiyan Cemaatlerin İmar Faaliyetleri", *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi (OTAM)*, Vol. 34, Ankara 2014, pp. 185-221.

13 The gates of the Church are generally kept closed except for religious ceremonies and rituals because of the disputes among communities. Henry Layard, who was in Jerusalem in the winter of 1839-1840, point out that a few people died as a result of the fights among communities that broke out in the Church and hence, the Egyptian government decreed that the gate should be kept closed. He also stated that only wealthy visitors could enter by paying a certain amount of donation (*backshish*). See A. Henry Layard, *Autobiography and Letters from His Childhood Until His Appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid*, I., Ed. William N. Bruce, London 1903, pp. 275, 277-278.

14 Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in the 19th Century the Old City*, Jerusalem 1984, pp. 205-207.

efforts to gain control of various sacred places in the Church.

Greeks, Catholics and Armenians have the right to perform rites where Jesus is believed to have been buried. In 1813, Catholics intervened in the mass (called *Kudas ayini* in Ottoman documents) Greeks were celebrating here. The Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem reported this to Istanbul and asked them to restrain Catholics. Eventually, an edict was issued, dictating that Catholics must not prevent Greeks from doing their rites in this place¹⁵.

Catholics disobeyed the edict of 1813 and intervened in the mass Armenians were celebrating in the Holy Sepulchre in 1829. Upon this, it was declared that Armenians had the right to celebrate the mass, light candles and burn incense in the Holy Sepulchre and that neither the Greeks nor the Catholics should interfere with these activities¹⁶.

The archive documents that were examined do not contain much information on the reasons why the Catholics, Greeks and Armenians do not get along well and especially why the Catholics intervene in the rites of the Greeks or Armenians. According to Ottoman archive documents, another controversial issue between the Greeks and Catholics, the reason of which is unknown, is the cover of Golgotha. Ottoman archive documents mention Golgotha as *Celcele*. A document dated 1847 reports that the Greeks and Catholics got into an argument because of the cover of a place known as Celcele in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The two communities were appeased and the argument over the cover was resolved for a while¹⁷.

Ottoman government thought that the argument over the cover was not a simple matter of curtain, the communities tried to cancel each other's rights and they would create another problem at Easter even if the issue of cover was resolved. For this reason, the leaders of the Greek, Catholic and Armenian communities were reminded of their rights that they had enjoyed and they were told that they had to solve the problems among them immediately¹⁸.

What is more, since the issue of cover was a new one, it was not possible to follow a precedent. Therefore, it has to be solved without transgressing on the rights of others. Eventually, the Ottoman administration saw it fit that the Greeks should put their cover first and then the Catholics should put a four-leg chair with precise dimensions on the Greek cover and put their cover on the chair. According to this decision, the Greek cover would still remain and the chair would be removed as soon as the rites of Catholics finished. Also, Catholics were forbidden to put their cover over the Greek cover at every opportunity so that the rights of both sides could be protected¹⁹.

15 BOA, Hatt-ı Hümayûn (Hereafter HAT), Document No: 1272/49328, 29 Zilhicce 1228/23 December 1813.

16 Turkish Historical Society Library in Ankara, Karakoç Sarkis, *Külliyât-ı Kavânîn*, Document No: 6392, Evâil-i Zilkade 1244/ May 1829.

17 BOA, Hâriciye Nezâreti Mektubî Kalemî (Hereafter HR.MKT), Document No: 18/50, 5 Ramazan 1263/14 August 1847.

18 BOA, İrâde Meclis-i Mahsus (İ.MMS), Document No: 32/926, 11 Cemâziye'l-âhir 1264/ 15 May 1848.

19 BOA, HR.MKT, Document No: 32/58, 20 Cemâziye'l-evvel 1266/3 April 1850. For detailed information on this topic, see Sami Kılıç and İhsan Satış, "Osmanlı Arşiv Vesikalarına Göre Hristiyan Cemaatlerin Kamame

One of the most important disputes other than those concerning the performance of rites is the one regarding the restorations to the Church. The architectural composition of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the culmination of the restorations over the centuries. The complex which comprises successive structures added to it over time gained its distinctive form especially in the early Byzantium and Crusades period²⁰. The Church underwent restorations many times during the Ottoman period, one of the most important of those restorations is the one after the fire in 1808.

A great fire broke out in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1808 in which large parts of the Church were burnt down. Consequently, who should make renovations to the Church became an issue of controversy among Catholic, Armenian and Greek communities.²¹ Armenians promised 200.000 piasters for the construction of the Arsenal to be built in Jerusalem in return for the permission to rebuild the Church²². Greeks responded by offering 1000 money bags of coins²³. However, the Ottoman government tried to solve the dispute by referring them to the court of law. The government established a commission of the Shaykh-al-Islam, a fatwa official and his assistants²⁴. The communities presented their case in three separate sessions chaired by the Rumeli Chief Military, Ali İzzet Bey, Judge and attended by *Nakîbü'l-eşrâf*, religious scholars, dignitaries and prominent figures from Greek and Armenian communities of Jerusalem²⁵. Eventually, the right to rebuild the Church was granted to the Greeks on condition that it would not be heightened and expanded. In addition, it was explicitly stated that the rights of Armenians must not be violated and Greeks must not intervene in visitation and ritual rights of Armenians²⁶.

When the Greeks were granted the right to rebuild the Church, France, the benefactor of the Catholics, felt slighted and protested on the grounds that the Ottomans favoured the Greeks instead of the French²⁷.

Once they obtained the right to do reparations to the Church, the Greeks exploited the opportunity and appropriated the whole of the central part in the Church and Katholikon for themselves²⁸. In 1811, French ambassador's deputy pointed out that the right to rebuild the church was given to the Greeks on condition that the Church would not be altered in any way and the Greeks must not prevent Catholics from visiting the Church, but they

Kilisesi ile İlgili Tartışmaları", *History Studies-International Journal of History*, Vol. 3/3, November 2011, pp. 235-237.

20 M. Baha Tanman, "Bir Fotoğraf Albümünün Penceresinden: Kudüs ve Gazze Sancaklarında Osmanlı Döneminin Sonlarında Yerleşimler ve Mimarlık", *Üç Kitaplı Kentler 19. Yüzyıl Fotoğraflarında Kudüs ve Kutsal Topraklar*, Editor: Ekrem Işın, İstanbul 2008, p. 37.

21 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, pp. 57-58.

22 BOA, HAT, Document No:1272/49327, 29 Zilhicce 1228/23 December 1813.

23 BOA, HAT, Document No:1272/49329, 29 Zilhicce 1228/23 December 1813.

24 BOA, HAT, Document No:1557/54, 29 Zilhicce 1236/27 September 1821.

25 BOA, HAT, Document No:772/36203, 29 Zilhicce 1254/15 March 1839.

26 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, p. 80.

27 BOA, HAT, Document No:1295/50293, 29 Zilhicce 1223/15 February 1809.

28 Catherine Nicault, "Osmanlı Kudüs'üne Dönüş", *Kudüs 1850-1948*, Translator: Estreya Seval Vali, İstanbul 2001, p. 71.

acted in complete violation of these conditions. He also stated that Catholic priests going to and from Jerusalem must not be interfered in any way according to the Capitulations of 1673 and 1740. This prompted the Ottoman government to remove the interferences in the way of Latin priests and transgressions in the places that were put in trust of the visiting priests. They also ordered the governor of Damascus and the *Kadı* (Muslim judge) of Jerusalem to prevent the Greek community from intervening in Catholic priests²⁹.

Another issue that pitted the Greeks against Catholics after the great fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the issue of covering and decoration of the Holy Sepulchre. Although this task was given to both Greeks and Catholics, it still led to disputes even among these two communities. As a result, an edict was sent to Jerusalem which dictated that the disputes between two communities have to be resolved immediately and the edict had to be read aloud in front of the priests³⁰.

Another problem among Christian sects regarding repairs to the Church arose with repairing the great dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When it became necessary to repair the dome in 1852, Sublime Porte (*Babıâli*) assigned an engineer for this task³¹. Based on the investigations by the engineer Esad Efendi³², the Ottoman government ordered Hafız Ahmet Pasha, the governor of Jerusalem, that the dome to be repaired by the state and returned to its former condition and the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem is authorized to arbitrate should any problem arise³³.

The documents we examined suggest that the reparation of the dome was postponed for a while. Also, rumours that some houses would be knocked down or sold to the French surfaced at this time³⁴. The order issued to the Hafız Ahmet Pasha, governor of Jerusalem, on May 8, 1853 indicated that the reparation of the dome was postponed because it was not urgent and would be resumed by the state at a later date³⁵. The decision for the houses around the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was that it was not permissible to knock them down because they were used as *zawiya* (*zaviye*) and *masjids* and so their windows facing the Church would be cancelled³⁶. Although the Ottomans accepted to repair the great dome of the Church, it was repaired by the joint efforts of France and Russia in 1862. A protocol was signed between the two governments³⁷ and an engineer from each country was sent to Jerusalem for reconnaissance and determining the required material³⁸. The Ottoman government ordered the governor of Jerusalem to aid the French and Russian engineers

29 BOA, France Complaint Register (Düvel-i Ecnebiye Defterleri-Fransa Ahkâm Defteri), Register No: 31/6, p. 11.

30 BOA, HAT, Document No: 1271/49236, 17 Receb 1235/30 April 1820.

31 BOA, İ.HR, Document No: 102/4982, 19 Zilhicce 1269/23 September 1853.

32 BOA, HR.MKT, Document No: 59/41, Evâhir-i Receb 1269/April-May 1853.

33 BOA, İ.HR, Document No: 98/4790-2, 25 Receb 1269/4 May 1853.

34 BOA, HR.MKT, Document No: 59/41, Evâhir-i Receb 1269/April-May 1853.

35 BOA, Cevdet Adliye (Hereafter C.ADL), Document No: 52/3122.

36 BOA, İ.HR, 328/21195, 26 Receb 1269/5 May 1853, p. 7, 12; BOA, İ.HR, 327/21191, 4 Receb 1269/ 13 April 1853, p. 5-6. In this case document exactly goes as follow: *Kamâme Kilisesi ittisâlinde olan hâneler zâviye ve mescid olarak hedm olunması câ'iz olmadığı halde Kamâme'ye nâzır pençerelerine divâr çekilerek sed ve bend kılınması husûslarına irâde-i seniyye-i mülûkânem müte'allik ve şeref-sudûr olmuş.*

37 Derek Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914-Church and Politics in the Near East*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1969, pp. 65-66.

38 BOA, İ.MMS, 33/1367, 9 Şaban 1283/18 May 1853.

in repairing the dome and transporting the materials coming from Paris from the port of Jaffa to Jerusalem³⁹. According to Hopwood, reparations that started in July 1867 were completed in 1869⁴⁰.

Organ Disagreements of the Catholics

According to the Ottoman archives, disputes on the organ of the Catholics arose two times in the 19th. century. The first one started after the great fire of 1808 which destroyed the Catholics' small organ. Disputes began between the Greeks and Catholics when, after the fire, the Catholics wanted to replace it with a bigger organ. A document of 1817 recounting the incident with details was found in the Ottoman archives. The document had been addressed to Salih Pasha, the governor of Damascus, the *mullah* and *mütesellim* of Jerusalem.

According to this document, the Catholics had brought a big organ from Europe a hundred years ago and install it in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. However, since it produced a very deep and unpleasant sound and it was forbidden to install anything new in the Church, both Muslims and other communities objected to the plan. As a result, the Catholics kept the organ inactive in their church for a long time. The small organ the Catholics used in the Church was burnt in the fire of 1808. Seeing this as an opportunity, the Catholics wanted to install the bigger organ they had brought from Europe in the Church. However, Süleyman Pasha, then governor of Damascus, did not approve of the plan. The Catholics applied for the second time to the governor of Damascus for the bigger organ to be placed in the Church. So, the Catholics were permitted to place the organ brought from Europe in the Church on condition that it had to be converted into the previous organ by removing as many as 150 pipes of it. The above-mentioned document reports that the Greeks consented to this plan as well, which suggests that it was the Greeks that stood against the Catholic plan to put the bigger organ in the Church.

This arrangement that lasted between 1808 and 1817 was broken again since the Catholics put the pipes they had removed from the organ back into it. The Catholics added 47 pipes to the organ, which made it produce a louder sound again. Besides, the Catholics interfered with the existing order in the Holy Sepulchre. This led to complaints from the Greek priests. Consequently, the interpreter of the Catholic priests was summoned and reminded that no one had the right to act against the edicts that regulated the order within the Holy Sepulchre. However, the Catholics largely ignored this warning.

So, the Greeks went to talk to the governor of Damascus. Since he was not available, they talked to the governor of Sidon (*Sayda*), who reminded the communities again and again of the fact that they had to comply with the existing edicts. He sent two *buyuruldu* (orders) and one official to Jerusalem⁴¹. Hayreddin Bey points out that this official was sent from Istanbul⁴².

39 BOA, İ.HR, 223/13026, 9 Şaban 1283/18 May 1853.

40 Derek Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine*, p. 66.

41 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, pp. 83-85, BOA, C.ADL, Document No: 25/1505, Evâsıt-ı Zilkade 1232/September 1817.

42 Hayreddin, *1270 Kırım Muharebesinin Tarih-i Siyâsiyesi*, Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı Matbaası, İstanbul 1326,

The official arriving in Jerusalem, the officers assigned by the *kadı* and the *mütesellim* all went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and took control of the situation. Eventually, the dispute was resolved by restoring the old order in the Holy Sepulchre and removing the 47 pipes from the organ. The Catholic intervention in the mass the Greeks celebrate in the Holy Sepulchre was ended as well⁴³.

Apart from the document dated 1817, another document dated 1819 was sent to the same administrators, which contained nearly all the points made in the document of 1817⁴⁴. Yet another document that contained the same points was sent to Süleyman Pasha, the governor of Damascus, the mullah, *mütesellim* and other administrators of Jerusalem in 1820⁴⁵. We do not know why document after document containing the same points were sent. However, it must be pointed out that any dispute was generally resolved by the principles outlined in earlier edicts. When a completely new problem emerged and since there were no antecedent principle regarding the solution of the new occurrence, it was resolved by issuing a new judgment. That may have been the reason why the judgment about the Catholics needed to be renewed. This, in a way, could have been done because the disputes were continuing or to inform the new administrators of the situation. Besides, since a decision was reached about the incident, this decision was repeated during the reign of the new Sultan.

On the death of Sultan Mahmut II in 1839, Sultan Abdülaziz ascended the throne. With the new Sultan on the throne, the decision regarding the Catholics was sent to the Mehmet Ali Pasha, governor of Egypt, the mullah, *mütesellim* and other administrators of Jerusalem⁴⁶.

Second round of organ disputes occurred at the end of 19th century. Most of the archive documents bear the date of 1896. Yet, a letter from the French Embassy to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Hâricîye Nezâreti*) on December 31, 1880 reveals that the disputes began earlier. The letter from the French Embassy indicates that the Catholics placed an organ on the floor below the place allocated to their use and placed a second one on the floor above in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the French Embassy on December 22, 1880 that the new organ in the Church would disturb the status quo and create controversy among communities. In response, the French government, based on the information they received from their consul in Jerusalem, pointed out that the new organ would not cause any disturbance in the status quo and the claims to the contrary were baseless because the Catholics were acting within the limits of their rights⁴⁷. The earliest document after this time is the one dated December 5, 1896. A close look at the documents after this date suggests that the incident started after this date. Indeed, the bureaucratic sequence in the correspondence between the governorate of

p. 100.

43 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, pp. 83-85, BOA, C.ADL, Document No: 25/1505, Evâsıt-ı Zilkade 1232/September 1817.

44 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, pp. 85-87, Evâhir-i Zilkade 1234/ September 1819.

45 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, pp. 88-90, Evâsıt-ı Muharrem 1236/ October 1820.

46 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No:9, pp. 115-117, Evâsıt-ı Cemâziye'l-evvel 1255/July 1839.

47 BOA, Hâricîye Nezâreti Siyasî Kısmı Belgeleri (Hereafter HR.SYS), Document No: 412/12, 19 Kanun-i Evvel 1296/31 December 1880.

Jerusalem, Sublime Porte and French ambassador shows this. The first document dated December 5, 1896 is the telegram that was sent by the İbrahim Hakkı Pasha (1890-1897), governor of Jerusalem, to the Ministry of Justice (*Adliye Nezâreti*). The telegram states that the Catholics were given permission to place an organ on the floor below their rightful place 40 years earlier in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but by placing another one on the floor above, disregarded the existing order and practices. The Greek Patriarch strongly objected to this and demanded that the new organ be removed immediately. What is more, disruption of the order in such an important place would cause general protestations from the other communities and would put the government in a difficult position. Lastly, the telegram states that the problem was relayed to the French Consulate, but no response was received and that the new organ must be removed immediately in order to prevent further problems among the communities⁴⁸.

The governor of Jerusalem informed both the Ministry of Justice and the Prime Ministry of the matter. The telegram dated December 5, 1896 contains the same issues as the one sent to the Ministry of Justice. There are not significant differences between them⁴⁹.

Like the governor of Jerusalem, Gerasimos (1891-1897), the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, too, sent a telegram of complaints to the Prime Ministry. The telegram dated December 6, 1896 states that, although the Catholic priests had no previous rights, they installed an organ in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre depending on a permission they had secured four years earlier and the loud sound of the organ made it difficult for the other communities to pray and conduct their rituals and, to add insult to the injury, they put a new and bigger organ in the Church of their own accord, which was in complete violation of the existing order and, therefore, the new organ had to be removed at all costs⁵⁰.

The important difference between the telegrams sent by the governor of Jerusalem and the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem to the office of the Prime Minister is the issue of when the Catholics put an organ in the Church last. Governor puts forward that the Catholics were granted permission to put an organ in the Church 40 years earlier in 1856, but the Patriarch says the permission was given 4 years ago in 1892. The Prime Minister was informed of the telegrams the governor and the Patriarch wrote to the office of the Prime Minister with a document dated December 7, 1896, which states that the Catholics were given permission to install an organ in the Church 40 years earlier⁵¹.

After the Prime Minister was informed about the matter, the telegram dated December 5, 1896 and the telegram of complaints from the Patriarch were forwarded together to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 7. The fact that the matter was forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows the necessity to inform the French Embassy of the matter. Indeed, a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mentions about the necessity to inform

48 BOA, Babiâli Evrak Odası (Hereafter BEO), Document No: 881/66057, 23 Teşrin-i Sâni 1312/5 December 1896.

49 BOA, HR.SYS, Document No: 409/4, p. 3, 23 Teşrin-i Sâni 1312/5 December 1896.

50 BOA, HR.SYS, Document No: 409/4, p. 2, 24 Teşrin-i Sâni 1312/6 December 1896.

51 BOA, BEO, Document No: 881/66057, 25 Teşrin-i Sâni 1312/7 December 1896.

the French Embassy of the matter so that status quo is not violated⁵². The memorandum dated December 15, 1896 sent from the office of the Prime Minister to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reveals that the matter was relayed to the French Embassy on December 7. It also mentions about the second telegram of complaints to the Ministry of Justice and Religious Sects (*Adliye ve Mezâhib Nezâreti*) sent by the Greek Patriarch and this telegram was relayed to French government on December 10, 1896⁵³.

The correspondence between the governor of Jerusalem, the Ministry of Justice and Religious Sects and Sublime Porte suggests that the organ problem was not resolved for some time, and the response of the French consul did not satisfy the communities in the Church. So, complaints continued. While the Greek Patriarch was the prominent complaining figure in earlier correspondence, this time Armenian Patriarch was displeased. The encrypted telegram sent from the governor of Jerusalem to the Ministry of Justice on December 19, 1896 reveals that, after they were informed of the matter on December 5, 1896, the response from the French consul did not satisfy the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs. In the encrypted telegram, it was also added that the organ that hindered religious rituals and disrupted the status quo had to be removed so that an international incident would not take place⁵⁴.

The governor of Jerusalem informed both the Ministry of Justice and Religious Sects and Sublime Porte on the same date. Sublime Porte decided that the matter had to be resolved in peace by the Ministry of Justice and Religious Sects without causing any improprieties and in concert with the French Embassy if need be. They wrote to both the Ministry of Justice and Religious Sects and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this matter⁵⁵. Still, in another letter to the Ministry of Justice and Religious Sects dated December 26, 1896, the Greek Patriarch is reported to have sent another telegram about the matter. In the telegram, the Greek Patriarch writes that it is forbidden to put an organ in the Church or add pipes to the old one and reiterates that the organ installed by the Catholics must be removed⁵⁶.

The above-mentioned telegram dated December 25, 1896 by the Greek Patriarch Gerasimos was sent to the office of the Prime Minister. In it, the Patriarch emphasizes the fact that it is forbidden to put a new organ in the Church or add pipes to the existing one in accordance with the status quo of 1852 and 1853 and the edicts of 1817 (*Hijri Evâsıt-ı Zilkade 1232*), 1819 (*Hijri Evâhir-i Zilkade 1234*) and 1839 (*Hijri Evâsıt-ı Muharrem 1236*), and therefore, the new organ installed by the Catholics in the Church must be removed⁵⁷.

The Greek Patriarch's telegram not only sums up the matter but also shows how it can be solved. Sublime Porte traditionally produced solutions to the issues arising among the communities according to the edicts they held. Therefore, the Patriarch suggested that

52 BOA, BEO, Document No: 877/65757, 25 Teşrin-i Sâni 1312/7 December 1896.

53 BOA, BEO, Document No: 881/66057, 3 Kanun-i Evvel 1312/ 15 December 1896.

54 BOA, BEO, Document No: 886/66410, 7 Kanun-i Evvel 1312/ 19 December 1896.

55 BOA, İrâde Hususi (İ.HUS), Document No: 51/10, 7 Kanun-i Evvel 1312/19 December 1896; BOA, BEO, Document No: 884/66253, 9 Kanun-i Evvel 1312/21 Aralık 1896.

56 BOA, BEO, Document No: 886/66410, 14 Kanun-i Evvel 1312/26 December 1896.

57 BOA, BEO, Document No: 894/67033, 13 Kanun-i Evvel 1312/25 December 1896.

this traditional method of settling problems be reinstituted and demanded that the new organ be removed. He also dwelt on the issue of the first organ and recounted how it was resolved and claimed that it should be the standard way of creating solutions and should not be deviated from.

Then, why did the Sublime Porte not employ this method in the first place and tried to solve the problem by engaging in a traffic of correspondence and talking to the French ambassador? What does the status quo in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, mentioned in a lot of the correspondence and in the Patriarch's telegram, mean?

The answer to the first question is that it could have a lot of reasons. The context and the frame of the present article allows us to touch on the two of those reasons. Based on previous experience, Sublime Porte does not wish the problems arising among the communities in Holy Places in Jerusalem to become international.

Indeed, France and Russia intervened in such issues as the reparation to the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, when and which community should pray in the Church of the Sepulchre of Saint Mary and to which community the keys to the gates of the Church of the Nativity should be entrusted, and these issues became international incidents. Probably, because Sublime Porte wished to avoid such an international incident, they wanted the organ issue to be settled by involving the French Ambassador in it. Also, a serious dispute between the Greeks and Catholics had been persisting on whether the ladder down to the Grotto of the Nativity, (*Mağaratü'l-Mehd*) on the northern side of the Church of the Nativity could be crossed with spiritual garments on. Russia and France felt the need to interfere in the matter. Therefore, in a tense atmosphere between the communities and with Russia and France stepping in from time to time, Sublime Porte could not have gotten itself in a difficult position. Hence, the matter had to be resolved with diplomacy before it escalated further.

Sublime Porte was trying to make sure that the Greeks did not suffer any loss of rights amidst the traffic of correspondence between governments and with France. It is obvious in the letters that Sublime Porte favoured the Greeks and put the Catholics in secondary position. This is reflected in the letters by mentioning the Greeks as *my tax-paying subjects* (*saltanat-ı seniyyenin ceziye-güzâr reayası*), the Catholics as *the group of the French staying temporarily in my realm* (*memleketimde müsâfereten bulunan Efrenc taifesi*)⁵⁸. What is the significance of this expression about the Catholics?

The documents which were examined regarding the issue emphasize three points about the Catholics. The first is that they are *staying temporarily here*, the second point is that they are under French protection. Thirdly, not all the Catholics in Holy Places are French. Staying temporarily probably refers to their temporary stay in the Church or Jerusalem. As mentioned earlier, the Catholic priests in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre would not leave their place and they would not leave their posts before other priests come from Europe and replace them. In my opinion, the emphasis on their being temporary means they are not permanent residents there. The fact that they are under French protection

⁵⁸ BOA, C.ADL, Document No: 25/1505.

means either they are French subjects or are protected by the French because they are Catholics. This topic is so extensive that it could be the subject of a separate study. Because, some researchers put forward that it was due to the Capitulations the Ottomans gave to France that Catholics were under French protection⁵⁹. However, when the Capitulations are examined, it can be seen that not a single article guarantees the protection of Catholics by France. The Capitulations contain articles which guarantee that Catholic priests can freely pray in the Church, they would be given permission to repair their church when the need arises, they could freely visit and leave Jerusalem⁶⁰. Lastly, the third emphasis lies in the fact that all the Catholic priests in the Holy Places are not French. Ottoman documents categorize Catholic priests as *Efrenç*, *Frank* and *Latin*. This is mainly to distinguish European Catholics from French Catholics. Besides, it is the Franciscan priests that represent Catholicism in Holy Places in Jerusalem, and most of these come from such European countries as Italy and Spain. Mehmet Tevfik Bey, the governor of Jerusalem, writes in his memoirs that the Catholic priests, most of who are not French, are not pleased with their benefactor, the French government. He says the French consul therefore, went to great extents to please these priests in the emerging disputes⁶¹.

The second question is what is meant by the status quo in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The term 'status quo' refers to the edicts issued in 1852 and 1853 during the time of Sultan Abdülmecit to prevent disputes in Holy Places between the communities and interference of Russia and France. The edicts specified the existing rights in Holy Places and stated that the rights given to the communities are irrevocable⁶².

While the organ dispute went on among the communities in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the French Embassy announced their opinions about the matter again on December 28, 1896. France declared that each community had places of their own in the Church and had the right to put anything there and by doing that, they did not necessarily violate the status quo. The Greek and Armenian Patriarchs continued to object and stated that the sound of the organ disturbed their religious rituals. Eventually, since status quo forbade anything new to be installed in the Church and the French Embassy admitted that the organ installed in the Church was new, it was decided that the organ had to be removed before the Easter. And, the Catholic priests and the French Embassy were notified that if they insisted not to remove the organ, the Ottoman administration would not take responsibility in case of any aggravation⁶³.

59 Besim Özcan, *Rus Donanmasının Sinop Baskını (30 Kasım 1853)*, Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Ph.D., Erzurum 1990, p. 27; Süleyman Kocabaş, *Paris'in 'Doğu Yolu'nda Yaptıkları Tarihî Türkler ve Fransızlar*, İstanbul 1990, pp. 74-75; Abdurrahman Bozkurt, "Fransa'nın Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki Katolikleri Himaye Hakkı ve Bunun Sona Ermesi", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, Vol. 52, 2010/2, İstanbul 2011, p. 129.

60 For capitulations agreements see Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuk ve Siyasi Tarih Metinleri*, I, Ankara 1953; Le Baron I. De Testa, *Recueil Des Traités De La Porte Ottomane*, I., Paris 1864; Bernard Camille Collas, *La Turchia Nel 1864*, Milano 1865.

61 Mehmet Tevfik Biren II. Abdülhamid, *Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Devri Hatıraları*, I., Preparer: F. Rezan Hürmen, İstanbul 1993, pp. 81-82, 109.

62 BOA, A.DVNS.KLS.d., Register No: 9, pp. 172-195; *Kudüs'te Hristiyanlara A'id Ziyaretgâhlara ve Ma'bedlere A'id Komisyon Tahkikatı (An Investigation Report Regarding Sanctuaries and Visited Places of Christians in Jerusalem)*, Ottoman Archive Library in İstanbul, pp. 1-37.

63 BOA, BEO, Document No: 888/66543, 17 Kanun-i Evvel 1312/29 December 1896.

The removal of the bigger organ before the Easter probably prevents a possible dispute, because thousands of people gather in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in this season, a dispute could lead to an unstoppable conflict. For instance, twenty thousand people gathered for the Ceremony of the Holy Fire in the Church of Holy Sepulchre in 1895. A serious fight broke out between the Greeks and the Armenians in this gathering. A lot of people were injured in this fight and the Greek Patriarch fell to the ground⁶⁴.

The correspondence we could find in the Ottoman archives ends here. It seems that the issue was resolved after the last letter which orders the removal of the organ and reflects the Ottoman administration's reluctance to take responsibility in possible outbreak of disputes. We do not have any information on whether the matter continued to be the subject of dispute after that. The memoirs of Mehmet Tevfik Bey, the governor of Jerusalem between 1897 and 1901, do not contain any information about the organ⁶⁵.

Conclusion

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was divided among Christian communities during Ottoman rule. The lion's share went to the Greeks, Armenians and the Catholics in decreasing order. While there are places put in each community's trust, there are also places for common rituals and visitation. The Catholics expanded their territory by buying part of the hangah belonging to the Salah al-Din Foundation for ninety thousand piasters in 1870. The fact that part of an Islamic foundation was given to the Catholics shows that the Ottomans protected the rights of the Catholics. Earlier, we mentioned that the Greeks were favored more than the Catholics. This does not necessarily mean that Catholics were ignored completely. Care was taken to meet their demands and protect their rights.

Disputes and fights took place in the Church among Greek, Armenian, Catholic communities from time to time. The Ottoman archive documents provide information about the fights only and not the main or religious reasons underlying the disputes and fights. When the issues that led to disputes are categorized, the most significant ones are the rites in the Church, reparations to the Church and possession of some holy places in the Church.

One of the most important issues in the disputes was the issue of the bigger organ placed in the Church. According to the Ottoman archive documents, the Catholics confronted the Greeks and Armenians twice in the 19th century over the issue of the organ. The Catholics failed in both of their attempts at placing a bigger organ in the Church. After both attempts, the Catholics were asked to use the organ they used before the fire of 1808. Thus, the other communities in the Church would not be disturbed and the status quo declared in 1852 and 1853 would be maintained. The most important reason for the Catholics failure to place an organ in the Church is the order in it. Any alteration to this order is forbidden and nothing new can be added to it. This way, a possible dispute among the communities is prevented and they can pray peacefully in the Church. This arrangement which established by the

64 BOA, Yıldız Sadâret Hususî Maruzât Evrakı (Y.A.HUS), 324/64, 19 Şevval 1312/15 April 1895; BOA, Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı (Y.MTV), 120/95, 27 Zilkade 1312.

65 Mehmet Tevfik Biren II. Abdülhamid, *Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Devri Hatıraları*, pp. 73-150.

Ottomans must have been successful, because later administrations followed their model.

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