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The Debate In The Ottoman Parliament On The Law For The Churches And Schools Of The Patriarchate And Exarchate

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Abstract

Members of Parliament in the Ottoman Parliament, took an active part in the parliamentary debate during the introduction of the law that regulated the competences of the Greek Patriarchate (Rum) and the Bulgarian Exarchate. After the parliamentary commission submits the law for parliamentary debate and approval of the same, some Albanian MPs also submitted an amendment for the partial amendment of the law in question. The parliamentary debate lasted for three parliamentary sessions during the years 1908-1909. Some MPs gave their arguments that the law in question did not ensure the use of the Albanian language in churches or schools that were under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate or the Exarchate. The debate was also complicated by the limited powers of the Ministry of Education, whose powers at that time had not yet been defined by law for schools that were under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate and the Exarchate.

Keywords: Ottoman Parliament, Albanian Schools, Patriarchate, Egzarchate. Ottoman Empire.

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Introduction

The subject of this paper is to analyse the process of drafting and passing laws in the Ottoman Parliament during the Ottoman Empire as well as the analysis of the debates of Ottoman deputies during the passing of a law. The law that is the object of this research is also related to the history of North Macedonia but is also an important topic in the current situation of the Macedonian church.

For the writing of this paper, I have read and analysed the transcripts of the Ottoman Parliament on the issue of approving the law on the Patriarchate and Exarchate. The law in question was debated by Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian and Turkish deputies. However, in this paper I have focused mostly on the speeches or debates of Albanian deputies during the years 1908-1909.

A scientific paper on the topic in question, using the transcripts of the Ottoman parliament, has not been done before, and therefore this scientific paper will contribute to the field of legal history for the Balkan states. The methodology I have chosen for writing the paper is by chronologically analysing the debates of the deputies during the parliamentary sessions. As the main reference for this scientific paper, I have used the transcripts of the parliamentary session of the Ottoman Parliament, which are fully published on the official website of the Parliament of the Republic of Turkey.

1. The historical background of the issue of the Exarchate and the Patriarchate

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Ottoman Empire did not abolish the institution of the Patriarchate. The Patriarchate, based in Constantinople, was integrated into the Ottoman Empire and had under its care the religious powers regarding the Orthodox Christian population. (Fortescue, A. The Orthodox Eastern Church, p.233) After a few years, the powers of the Patriarchate were extended to the entire Orthodox Christian population in the Balkans, as a result of the Ottoman conquest of the entire Balkans. However, in Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo, in coordination with the Patriarchate, the Archbishopric of Ohrid also continued to exercise its ecclesiastical authority over religious matters of a part of the Orthodox population. During the period of the Ottoman Prime Minister (sadrazam) Mehmet Sokoli (1505-1579), the establishment of the Patriarchate of Ipek (Peja, Peç) was allowed, which took over some of the powers of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. However, in 1766, as a result of the centralist policies of the Ottoman Empire, the powers of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the Patriarchate of Ipek were delegated to the Patriarchate of Istanbul. The situation changed again when in 1870, as a result of the rise of Bulgarian nationalism and at the insistence of Russia, the sultan allowed the establishment of the Exarchate (Jirecek, C. Das fürstenthum Bulgarien p.236).

The Patriarchate of Istanbul did not welcome the establishment of the Exarchate and criticized that decision on the grounds that the establishment of the Exarchate would incite discord among the Orthodox population of the Balkans. On the other hand, the Exarchate criticized the Patriarchate for disregarding the linguistic

rights of the Bulgarians and for its assimilationist policies in the Ottoman Empire. With the establishment of the Exarchate, many Orthodox churches and believers moved away from the competence of the Patriarchate and accepted the new authority of the Exarchate. However, in some cities and villages, the Orthodox population was not unified in their collective decision on whether to remain under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate or to pass under the jurisdiction of the exarchate. (Marcuse, H. Serbien und die Revolutionsbewegung in Makedonien, p.18). This situation also became a cause for violent conflicts among the Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire. The conflicts were most pronounced in Macedonia and especially in the Vilayet of Monastir, where the Orthodox population consisted of ethnic Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks and Vlachs. This situation was aggravated more between the Bulgarian and Greek populations. As a result of the violence, Greece and Bulgaria sent some of their military superiors and weapons to the territory of the Ottoman Empire, with the aim of organizing detachments from the local inhabitants. The purpose of organizing armed groups was to protect the population from attacks by the opposing side and to expand the influence of the states in question among the Orthodox population of Macedonia (Allen U. The East End Of Europe, p. 40). In the vilayet of Manastir, the situation became even more severe when in 1904, during the period of Prime Minister Ferit Pasha Vlora (1902-1908), the Vlach millet was recognized. This recognition allowed the Vlachs to have autonomy within the patriarchate and enabled them to practice religious rites in the Vlach language and also enabled them to open schools in the Vlach language.

2. The Proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908

After the promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908, parliamentary elections were held in the Ottoman Empire. Albanians elected their deputies to the Ottoman Parliament, so that out of a total of 240 deputies, about 30 deputies were Albanian. Among the Albanian deputies who have influenced Albanian politics even after the Ottoman Empire were deputies Ismail Qemali, Esat Toptani and Hasan Prishtina. With the promulgation of the constitution, an amnesty was also declared for the chetas that had shown activity in the territories of the European part of the Ottoman Empire. According to statistics that were also published in the Albanian newspaper of Thessaloniki "Lirija", out of dozens of chetas, only one had been Albanian ("Të re", Lirija, Year: I, No: 5, (1908): 1). The cadre in question was that of Bajo Topulli, who had been sentenced to death by the court, because he was charged with the murder of the Metropolitan of Korça Foti (Said Olgun "Bayram Fehmi Bey …, p.135).

The Ottoman Empire divided its population based on religion and not on ethnicity or language. Religious affiliations were Islamic, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Gregorian (Armenian). The law on the patriarchate and exarchate was intended to resolve issues within the Orthodox population of Rumelia (the Balkans). How complicated the issue of schools was can be understood from a 1903 statistic for the schools of the Vilayet of Manastir. According to that statistic, in the Vilayet of Manastir there were 22 Turkish high

schools (rushdije) and 55 high schools for Christians, as well as 1 Jewish school. Of the Christian schools, 42 were Greek, 10 Bulgarian, 1 Protestant, 1 Vlach, 2 Serbian and 2 French (Uğur ÖZCAN, "1878–1912 Yılları Arasında Manastır Vilayeti'nde Okullaşma ve Okullaşmaşının Milliyetçilik Üzerindeki Etkisi" Avrasya İncelemeleri Dergesi - Journal of Eurasian Studies (Uluslararası Hakemli Dergi), Vol: II, No: 1, (2023): 364).

In such a situation, the Ottoman government took measures to regulate by law the powers of the patriarchate and the exarchate. The then Prime Minister of the Ottoman Empire, Husni Hilmi Pasha, was very familiar with the complex situation on the ground, as he had served as Inspector General for Macedonia during the period 1902-1908.

The Constitution of the Ottoman Empire was drafted in 1876. The legal commission that drafted the aforementioned constitution was based on the Belgian constitution. This meant that the work of the Ottoman parliament was similar to that of the parliaments of European countries. The parliamentary sessions of the Ottoman parliament began with the opening of the session by the president or one of the vice presidents of the parliament. Then the presence of the deputies in the session was recorded, the agenda was set and voted on, the list of deputies who would give speeches was compiled, the minister responsible for the issue under debate participated in the parliamentary debate and finally the deputies voted on the approval, amendment or rejection of the bill.

3. The draft law regulating the powers of the Patriarchate and the Exarchate

The draft law regulating the churches and schools of the patriarchate and the exarchate consisted of a total of 12 articles. Article 12 of the law determined that the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice would be competent for the implementation of the law (Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Cerıdesi, İnikad: 138, Devre: I, Cilt: 6, İçtima Senesi: 1, (19 August 1909): 1). The draft law drafted by the government was sent to the parliament for elaboration and approval on 29 June 1909 (Ibid., 10). The original title of the draft law was: "Rum Patrikhanesi ile Bulgar Ekzarhlığı beyinde münazaunfih kilise ve mektepler hakkında təyiha-i kanuniye".

The parliamentary debate on the law in question took place in three parliamentary sessions, which were held on August 19, 1909, March 8, 1910 and March 14, 1910. The period from when the parliamentary debate began until the law in question was approved lasted 7 months. However, the reasons for postponing the adoption of the law were of a political and technical nature. One of the technical reasons was the change of the Minister of Justice at that time.

The law provided that, first of all, it would resolve the problems between the Bulgarian and Greek populations regarding certain churches and schools, under whose jurisdiction they would remain. The law provided that in those settlements where the Orthodox population was unique, they would declare whether

they would remain under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate or would pass under the jurisdiction of the exarchate.

In cases where the population of a settlement was not unified in its stance, then the majority of the Orthodox population of a settlement had the right to determine whether they would remain under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate or would pass under the jurisdiction of the exarchate. According to the law in question, in cases where the minority of the population of a settlement had to leave their church, in those cases they would be allowed by the government to build another church and school in their settlement, in order to continue to remain under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate.

3.1. Parliamentary session of August 19, 1909

During the parliamentary session of August 19, 1909, the law in question was put on the agenda. During the debate of the parliamentary session of August 19, 1909, 7 Albanian deputies participated. They were: Hasan Basri (Dibar), Nexhip Draga, Shahin Kolonja, Hasan Prishtina, Hamdi Beu (Preveza), Gani Frashëri and Janko Mamapulo (Gjirokastër). Also active during the debate was the deputy of Korça, Misha Efendi, who was a member of the Vlach community.

The first Albanian deputy to speak in the debate on the law in question was the deputy of Dibar, Hasan Basri (Dukagjini). He emphasized the importance of the law in question and reminded the deputies that before the proclamation of the constitution, the conflict over the churches among the Orthodox population had bled Macedonia. Therefore, according to him, it was necessary for that law to be approved as soon as possible and he proposed that the debate not last more than a week (Ibid., 551).

On behalf of the government, the Minister of Justice Nurettin Pasha spoke, explaining that the law on the patriarchate and the exarchate was necessary, since there were disagreements between the two communities (believers of the same religion) in the European part of the Empire (Rumelia), and that if the issue was not regulated by law, then there was a risk that violent riots between the groups would be repeated (Ibid., 554).

The next Albanian to take the floor was the deputy from Skopje Nexhip Draga. He proposed that instead of the word community, the word population (ahvali) be mentioned, e.g. Vlachs, etc., etc. Nexhip Draga's speech was interrupted by the noise of several deputies who reacted to his speech. Meanwhile, the Greek deputy of Thessaloniki, Jorgi Honeus, took the floor, who, among other things, said that there was no need to mention nationalities, because this law regulated the issue of churches, which means that a spiritual issue was being regulated. On that occasion, the deputy in question mentioned that Greeks, Serbs and Vlachs participated in the Patriarchate, while Bulgarians and a part of Vlachs participated in the Exarchate (Ibid., 555). Immediately after the speech of the deputy of Thessaloniki, the deputy of Korça (Görice) Shahin Kolonja (Shahin Teki) took the floor, who opposed the previous speaker. Shahin Kolonja emphasized the fact that they demanded that schools come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, but the patriarchate opposed it. Therefore, this issue was also a linguistic issue and not only a religious issue, he

said. So, it should be understood that the patriarchate was not the patriarchate of the Greek language but was the patriarchate of all Orthodox Christians, added Shahin Kolonja in his speech. The Speaker of the Parliament interrupted Shahin Kolonja's speech, adding that what he was talking about was outside the topic of the debate (Ibid., 555). However, Nexhip Draga again intervened in the debate and mentioned the fact that if the law aims to resolve conflicts between Greeks and Bulgarians, then one should not forget that there are also Orthodox Albanians and Serbs. According to him, there have been conflicts between Albanians and Serbs and that such a conflict may arise again in the future. Therefore, in order to avoid the need to draft a similar law in the future, it would be right for this issue to be resolved within the law in question by mentioning all congregations in the law, he said. Only then would the conflicts arising from the issue of churches and schools be resolved, he added (Ibid., 555-556).

After Nexhip Draga's speech, the Greek MP from Izmir, Pavlo Karolidi, intervened. Among other things, he said that Albanians and Serbs are free to choose to enter the patriarchate or exarchate and that the patriarchate has never been an obstacle to anyone's languages. He said that in order to use the language of an Orthodox population, they must apply officially and based on the statutory rules of the patriarchate to exercise such a right. In such a situation of the development of the debate, the Minister of Justice Nuretin Pasha intervened. He proposed that it would be best to discuss the issue of languages, and especially for Serbs and Vlachs, when discussing Article 8 of the law in question. (Ibid., 556). The minister's avoidance of mentioning Albanians during his intervention meant in a way that the government was not of the opinion to allow changes to the law in favor of mentioning Albanians or Albanian in the law.

The Prishtina MP, Hasan Prishtina (Vuçiterneli Hasan), also participated in the debate. He supported the proposal of his colleague Nexhip Draga that in Article 1 of the law other nationalities of Rumelia be mentioned. According to Hasan Prishtina, the law did not include only Bulgarians and Greeks, therefore other nations should also be taken into account. Among other things, Hasan Prishtina said that in the Ottoman Empire there were half a million Orthodox Albanians and the same number of Serbs and Vlachs (Ibid., 557).

The Gjirokastra MP, Janko Mamapulo, was perhaps the only Orthodox Albanian MP. He was very active in the debate in question and on this occasion gave a long speech. Among other things, he contradicted the speaker (alluding to Nexhip Draga) that there were no conflicts between the Orthodox members who were under the tutelage of the patriarchate, that is, between Orthodox Albanians and Serbs. He also said that there is no problem between Orthodox Albanians, Greeks, Serbs and Vlachs and opposed the proposals of other Albanian deputies to mention other nationalities in the law. He explained his arguments by giving examples from his experience in the Vilayet of Ioannina. He said that in his village, Albanians in the church were free to pray in Albanian and that he himself was an Orthodox Christian and that no one had told him that he was

not allowed to pray in Albanian. According to Janko Mamapulo, the law proposed by the government should be accepted without changes and in that way they would make their contribution to the good of the state (Ibid., 557).

The Albanian MP from Preveza, Hamdi Bey, also participated in the debate. Among other things, he said that the Orthodox Albanians and Vlachs did not want to be separated from the Patriarchate, but the issue was that the Patriarchate only sent them priests who spoke Greek and that the inhabitants of the Ioannina vilayet did not understand what was said in church. Hamdi Bey also supported the proposal of Nexhip Draga and Hasan Prishtina on the issue of mentioning Albanians in the law. According to him, a lot of blood has been shed because of the issue of churches and language, therefore it was not reasonable for the law in question to resolve only issues between Greeks and Bulgarians (Ibid., 558-559). The next Albanian MP to participate in the debate was Gani Frashëri. He said that the law in question does not aim to resolve religious issues but national-ethnic issues (kavmiyet meshesi). Do not think that the issue has to do with church buildings, since the conflict over churches is only a curtain and that behind the curtain was the real problem between nations, he said. Therefore, the issue was not a spiritual issue, but an ethnic (national) issue, Gani Frashëri insisted in his speech (Ibid., 559).

After Gani Frashëri's speech, the next deputy gave a speech. The Speaker concluded that the debate on Article 1 of the proposed law had been exhausted and asked the deputies to vote for the approval of the article without changes. The majority of the deputies voted for the approval of Article 1 of the law on the patriarchate and the exarchate. After the vote, the debate on Article 2 of the law in question began immediately.

In the debate on Article 2, only Nexhip Draga briefly debated. Article 2 was also approved by a majority vote.

During the debate on Article 3, the Greek deputy Kozmidi Pandelaki gave a long speech, during which he said that for the construction of a church in a village, all Christians, regardless of ethnicity, give money, and not only Christians but also Muslims (Ibid., 568). The debate on Article 3 deepened and the Bulgarian deputy of the Monastery, Panchedorev Efendi, intervened, criticizing those who were called to the firman (decision) of the patriarchate for determining the jurisdiction of churches. The deputy in question said that if a settlement was given the decision to build a church by the patriarchate, this did not automatically mean that the patriarchate had the title deed (ownership) of the church, this also due to the fact that the Exarchate was established 40 years ago (1870), while many churches were built before the establishment of the Exarchate (Ibid., 578). One of those who gave a speech was the deputy of Antalya, Mehmet Hamdi, who was a imam. The imam in question said that the church is neither a commodity nor a property and that it was not built for the villagers who built it nor for humanity because the church was built for the sake of religion. (Ibid., 580).

The deputy of Thessaloniki Dimitar Vlahov during his speech said that the Greeks wanted to keep the Bulgarians subjugated. According to him, the Albanians and Vlachs also wanted to pray in their own language. The Patriarchate belongs to the Orthodox and if the will of the majority is not respected, it is harmful to the state (fatherland), said Vlahov (Ibid., 584). After the speeches, Article 3 was also approved by the majority of the deputies and with this the parliamentary session of 19 August 1909 ended, while the continuation of the debate and the approval of other articles of the law were scheduled to continue in another parliamentary session.

3.2. Parliamentary session of 8 March 1910

On 8 March 1910, the next parliamentary session on the Law on the Patriarchate and the Exarchy continued. The new Minister of Justice, Molla Nexhmeti, was also present at the session. Before the debate began, the Berat deputy Ismail Qemali intervened procedurally in the parliamentary session, requesting some clarifications on the budget law (Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Cerıdesi, İnikad: 50, Devre: I, Cilt: 2, İçtima Senesi: 2, (8 March 1910): 622). Ismail Qemali had been present at at least two parliamentary sessions on the law in question. However, in the stenograms of the Ottoman parliament, he does not appear to have delivered a speech on the law in question.

After Ismail Qemali's intervention, the content of Article 4 of the proposed law was read. Article 4 provided that in those settlements where the population was divided whether they would remain under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate or would come under the jurisdiction of the exarchate, in those cases, if a settlement had two churches, then one church would belong to the patriarchate and the other to the exarchate.

The Greek deputy of Serfice (Monastir Province) Jorgo Bosho in his speech criticized the content of Article 4 and opposed the possibility that in some settlements the powers of the patriarchate for churches and schools would be delegated to the exarchate. He explained his opposition by giving an example that if a citizen has 3 houses, while a poor citizen has no house, it is not logical to take a house from a rich person and give it to a poor person with the excuse that the poor person has no house. Jorgo Bosho said that he could not agree that his father's remains, which were in the church cemetery, should be given to the exarchate. He also insisted that there were no differences between Bulgarians and Greeks because 40 years ago they had all been members of the patriarchate. Therefore, according to him, the issue of churches was not a religious issue but a political one. During his speech, Jorgo Bosho mentioned all members of the Orthodox peoples, including the Montenegrins and Vlachs, while he did not mention the Christian Orthodox Albanians (Ibid., 627-628).

In this parliamentary session with speeches and debates, the Greek and Bulgarian deputies were the most active, while the Albanian deputies did not participate in the debate. At one point during the parliamentary

session, the absence of the majority of deputies was noted and as a result the session was interrupted and the debate on other articles was scheduled to continue the next day (Ibid., 637).

3.3. Plenary Session of March 14, 1910

On March 14, 1910, the next parliamentary session was held on the law on the Patriarchate and Exarchate. On that occasion, the Speaker of the Assembly ordered the reading of Article 5 and invited the deputies to continue the debate on the law in question. Article 5 provided that the government would provide financial assistance for the construction of churches and schools for the Orthodox population of a settlement, if they were separated from the patriarchate or exarchate and had to build a new church and school. Also present at the session was the Minister of Justice Necmetin Molla. Several Turkish deputies also debated Article 5. The deputy from Konya, Hoxha Mehmet Vehbi, expressed his doubts about the implementation of this article, while another Hoxha, Deputy Mehmet Tevfik, said that the government had planned to spend 45 thousand liras on the construction of churches and schools, as a result of the implementation of Article 5. Deputy Mehmet Tevfik said that he had lived in Rumelia for 6 years and knew the problem very well, and according to him, if another 200 thousand liras were spent for that purpose, it would still be difficult to resolve the situation regarding the issue of churches in Rumelia (Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Cerıdesi, İnikad: 54, Devre: I, Cilt: 3, İçtima Senesi: 2, (14 March 1910): 126-127).

The other Turkish deputy from Kutahya, Ahmet Ferit, spoke about religious freedoms. He said, among other things, that the Bulgarian Exarchate was formed for the religious freedom of Bulgarians, but there is no need to create an Albanian or a Vlach Exarchate in the name of religious freedom. According to him, this issue could be resolved in Article 8 of the law in question. After the speech of the deputy in question, the Minister of Justice also debated, who also mentioned Christian Albanians during the discussion (Ibid., 147).

Among the Albanian deputies, the deputy of Edirne Riza Tevfik took the floor. He said that in every constitutional state, freedom and faith are primary rights, therefore believers have the right to pray to God in their own language. His speech was interrupted by the Greek deputy of Thessaloniki, Jorgi Honeus, who told him that in parliament we are all Ottomans but we are forced to speak Turkish (Ibid., 130). Riza Tevfik responded to his Greek colleague by saying that there is neither a church nor a university here. This is the National Assembly and the nation is Ottoman, and according to the constitution Turkish is the official language, he said. However, outside the parliament you are free to use Greek and no one dares to deny you your rights, he added. Another Greek MP from Izmir, Karolidis, opposed his Greek colleague and said that it is a mistake to have the impression that our religion allows you to pray to God only in Greek. Our religion, on the contrary, allows different languages to be used freely in church, he said (Ibid., 130-131).

The Bulgarian MP from Serez Hristo Delchev in his speech mentioned the fact that 50 years ago all Orthodox were part of the patriarchate and were considered Greeks (Rum). However, with the birth of

national consciousness, the Bulgarians separated from the patriarchate, just as other nations within the Orthodox were born, such as the Serbs, Arabs, Vlachs and Albanians. There are already Albanians who are part of the Exarchate, he said. Although they speak Albanian, they consider themselves Bulgarians. However, one day they will understand that they are Albanians and will want to break away from the Exarchate and join the Patriarchate. Therefore, with this law we should not keep this situation in the status quo, but we should resolve it in such a way that all Orthodox communities are mentioned in the law, he added. Ismail Qemali intervened in the speech of the Bulgarian deputy, who, after declaring himself an Albanian, asked him to name a village where Albanian was spoken and where they could be asked in the future to leave the Exarchate. Hristo Delchev replied that there are such cases in the Dibra region as well (Ibid., 134).

Shahin Kolonja took the floor again and said that there were villages with 500 houses where only Albanian was spoken, but their part of the population belonged to the exarchate while the rest belonged to the patriarchate. According to him, this happened because the people there were ignorant (jahil), but after 5 years they will become aware and say that we prayed in Bulgarian and Greek, but now we want to pray and learn Albanian. Shahin Kolonja asked the question of how the government would respond to their request in that case? Perhaps the government would tell them that the law does not provide for such a right, he said (Ibid., 137). Among other things, Shahin Kolonja says: "In an article of the law it should be emphasized that the different nations that are members of the Patriarchate, that is, Bulgarians, Arabs, Serbs, Vlachs, Albanians, whatever they are (noise). Stop, […]" (Ibid., 138). Shahin Kolonja's speech was interrupted by the noise of the deputies, noise which was related to the mention of Orthodox Albanians. We can also assume that that noise may have come from the Greek deputies, because some of them opposed the possibility of opening schools in the Albanian language for Orthodox Albanians and practicing Albanian for religious rites in the churches of the patriarchate. However, Shahin Kolonja continued his speech and, among other things, proposed that an article be added to the law with the following content: "The Patriarchate will not oppose the nations found in Rumelia if they wish to practice religious rites, prayers and supplications to God in their own language in the church, as well as in schools to learn in their own language. Make it such an article that this issue is not politicized" (Ibid., 138).

With the debates on Article 8 of the law, which provided for the use of languages, the first to speak was Gani Frashëri. He said that as a Muslim he had no reason to intervene in this debate, but this was not a religious issue but a political one. Gani Frashëri said that in Chameria, in Himara, in the sandzak of Gjirokastra, Orthodox Christians are historically Albanians by nationality and language, but the patriarchate considers them Greek. In Korça, even though there are no Greeks, the patriarchate considers them as if they were all Greeks, said Ganiu. Some Albanians say that you are Bulgarians, Greeks or Latins, therefore he

requested that Albanians be mentioned in Article 8 and that they be under the protection of the law (Ibid., 141-142). The Minister of Justice intervened in the debate and provided clarifications on the content of Article 8. He said that the use of the language of Christian Albanians, Serbs and Vlachs was also regulated by that law. If they wanted to use their language in church or in schools, then the government would intervene so that they could exercise this right, the minister said.

The deputy of Gjirokastra Janko Mamopulo accepted Article 8 as it was and believed that the entire law would serve public order (Ibid., 144). On the issue of Article 8, Gani Frashëri intervened again in the debate and said that since in Korça all Christians were Albanians, what would happen if those religious rites continued to be practiced in Greek. Therefore, he proposed again that the language issue be resolved by law. After Gani Frashëri's speech, the Greek deputy of Thessaloniki, Artas Jorgaki, intervened, who said that perhaps those in Korça could be Albanians or maybe Greeks, but this issue cannot be resolved by law because this is a matter of individual conscience (Ibid., 145).

The Korça MP, Misha, also participated in the debate. He discussed it with some irony and said that when the government drafted Article 8, he believed that the government had undertaken to resolve a very important issue. But it seems that the government's intention was to leave only Bulgarians and Greeks in Rumelia, he said. Misha's speech was interrupted by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Talat Bey, who, addressing Misha, said that you yourself are aware that what you are saying is not true. MP Misha continued his speech and on that occasion proposed that Article 3 also mention Vlachs and Albanians (Ibid., 149).

Jorgo Bosho, the Greek MP for Serfiçe, said that this law only regulates the issue of the patriarchate and the exarchate and this resolves their religious issues. We should not resolve language issues with this law, he said. In a church of the Greek (Rum) congregation, religious rites will undoubtedly be performed in Greek. In a Greek school, Albanians and Greeks will definitely learn Greek. If they want to learn in their own language, let them build their own schools, said Jorgo Bosho (Ibid., 145).

Despite the insistence of the Albanian MPs for changes to Article 8, the article that was supposed to regulate the issue of the use of languages in churches and schools, Article 8 was accepted by the majority of MPs without changes (Ibid., 150).

The debate on other articles of the law continued with a weaker intensity. With the approval of Article 11, the debate on the law on churches and schools of the patriarchate and exarchate also ended (Ibid., 154).

In conclusion, the law proposed by the government to the parliament was approved in the parliament without changes.

Conclusions

The procedures for passing laws in the Ottoman parliament were similar to today's parliamentary procedures in the Assembly of North Macedonia. From the debates in the Ottoman parliament, we understand that the party affiliation of the deputies was not decisive in their political stance. Ethnic

affiliation also influenced the political stance of the deputies on a particular issue or law. From the debate in question, we understand that the Minister of Justice was careful not to mention Orthodox Albanians during the discussion, but this situation changed with the replacement of the Minister of Justice, who also mentioned Christian Albanians during the discussion. However, due to the opposition of some Greek deputies, the government refused to make changes in favor of Orthodox Christian Albanians. The government had to maintain a balance with the Greek deputies who were part of the ruling Party for Progress and Unity (Ittihat ve Terakki) and not to disrupt relations with the patriarchate. This can also be concluded from the fact that it took 7 months for the law to be passed, from the moment it was introduced in parliament until its approval. However, Albanian deputies, such as Nexhip Draga and Gani Frashëri, who were influential in the ruling party, did not hesitate to demand that the law on churches and schools of the patriarchate and exarchate mention Orthodox Christian Albanians. The Albanian deputies, with their discussions in the Ottoman parliament, managed to update the issue of Albanian schools and with this action they managed to contribute to education in the Albanian language in the Ottoman Empire. Their activity was concretized 4 months later when the Congress of Debar was held in Debar and in article 10 of the declaration of the congress in question, the need to open schools for Orthodox Christian Albanians in the jurisdiction of the patriarchate was mentioned (Manastırlı Kenan, Debre Kongresi, (Cihan Matbaası, 1912), 11).

The experience of the Albanian deputies who gained in the Ottoman parliament is understood to have influenced them to gain experience to lead the government of the Albanian state with the formation of Albania. Later, the prime ministers of Albania were the Ottoman deputies Ismail Qemali, Esat Toptani and Hasan Prishtina. While the deputy and at the same time the secretary of the Ottoman parliament, Myfid Libohova, later became the minister of justice in the government of Albania and influenced the formation of the justice system in Albania and the adoption of the laws of several European countries in the legal order of Albania.

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