

MIGRATIONS AS A CONSTANT OF THE SERBIAN HISTORY: ON THE EXAMPLE OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA UNDER THE OTTOMAN RULE

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Abstract: The results of the Ottoman census books for the Branković Region, i.e., the *sanjaks* (provinces) of Vučitrn, Skadar and Dukadjin dating from the second half of the 15th and 16th century, placed in the context of the general political and historical events in the Ottoman Empire, present some of the most valuable sources for the research of demographic movements in Kosovo and Metohija during the first two centuries of the Ottoman rule. Those data show the ethnic homogeneity of the Serbian population of present-day Kosovo and Metohija in the above-mentioned historical period. The ethnic structure of Kosovo and Metohija radically changed immediately after the Great Migration of the Serbs in 1690, when the Serbian population left this region, and their settlements were occupied by Albanian nomadic tribes, who descended into these fertile lands from the harsh mountain regions of northern Albania. Although this issue has not been satisfactorily elaborated in historical science so far, the available sources make it possible to draw some firm conclusions about the forcibly changed ethnic structure of Kosovo and Metohija, beginning with the 18th century, when an Albanian settlement network was established in a region that had a majority Serbian population during medieval times and the first centuries of the Ottoman rule.

Key words: Kosovo and Metohija, Ottoman Empire, Ethnic Structure, Ottoman Census Books, Migrations.

The study of the demographic movements in the Serbian lands under the Ottoman rule represents one of the key questions of the past of the Serbian nation, which has yet to be scientifically elaborated in an appropriate way. In general, research in the field of historical demography in domestic scholarship is not represented to the extent that its significance, not only for the evaluation of the past but for the perception of the present and for thinking about the future, would demand. Such a state of research of historical-demographical parameters, in the case of the period under Ottoman rule, is primarily the result of an absence of adequate sources that would serve as a basis for drawing the relevant conclusions.¹

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¹ In this work, historical demographics have been understood in a broader sense than Presat/Wilson's definition by which this science is "merely an application of demographic analysis