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**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE FALCONERS'  
INSTITUTION, NUMERICAL COMPOSITION AND GEOGRAPHICAL  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE FALCONERS IN THE CENTRAL BALKANS  
IN THE 15TH – 16TH CENTURY**

(Summary)

The study examines the organizational structure of the falconers' institution in the Ottoman Empire, the numerical composition and geographic distribution of the falconers in the Central Balkans in the 15th and 16th centuries. Firstly, the article presents the hierarchical structure of the upper and middle command line in the main subdivisions of the metropolitan Palace Falconry Centre - the internal service (enderun) and the external service (birun), as well as the three falconer groups from the external falconry centre - şahinciyan, cakırcıyan, atmacacıyan. These three groups differ in the fact that each of them is responsible for catching, raising and training various falcons and hawks for the hunting needs of the Sultan and his environs acting as the ruling class in the Empire. Based on published and unpublished Ottoman documents, mainly two unpublished 1560 registers of the falconers of the shahinciyan and cakırcıyan categories, the originals of which being kept in Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi in Istanbul; data are presented on the numerical composition and geographic distribution of the falconers in the Central Balkans. They are named in the Ottoman documents with the generalized terms doğancıyan and bazdaran. The geographic scope of the study includes Northwestern Thrace (the Philibe/Plovdiv and Pazardzhik kazas, as well as the Chepino nahiye) and the

sanjaks Sofia, Nikopol and Silistra (Sofia, Pirotsko, Berkovsko, all Central northern and north-eastern Bulgaria). Greater attention is paid to those falconers who, for their service, are exempt only from some taxes and are in possession of official Falconry patrimonies and farmhouses. These provincial falconers are also divided into the three main falconer groups (shahinciyan, cakırcıyan and atmacacıyan). But, furthermore, according to the nature of their service they are called uvacıyan and kayacıyan when they observe the nests of the raptors and take the small falcons from them at certain times of the year; Tuzakcıyan, who catch adult birds of prey with traps; Gorencıyan, raising and training already captured falcons and hawks and goturucıyan who supplied the birds to the metropolitan Falconry centre. Most gorencıyan and goturucıyan, however, were Muslims, the owners of Timars, while the Christian falconers, owners of official patrimonies, with some exceptions, usually served as uvacıyan and kayacıyan. By 1560, not only the titular owners of falconry patrimonies, but most of their sons and brothers, as well as some newly registered falconers, usually haimanes – people with an undetermined place of residence, also perform falconry service, but only for exemption from state extraordinary taxes. Only a relatively small group of youngest unmarried sons and brothers of falconers, or once again haimanes with undetermined place of residence (95 Christians and 97 Muslims) are not recorded as falconers, but play the role of a sort of reserve in the Falconry institution. The Ottoman registers used show that in 1560 only in the Nikopol and Silistra sanjaks and in the Philibe and Pazardzhik kazas there are over 200 Christian and Muslim settlements in which there are 963 falconers, sons and brothers of falconers from the groups of shahinciyan and cakırcıyan. In the Sofia, Shekirkoy (Pirot) and Berkovitsa kazas of the Sofia Sanjak in the middle of the 16th century there are 9 Muslims and 89 Christians performing Falconer Service. The total number of those serving in the two major falconer groups (shahinciyan and cakırcıyan) in the Central and Northeastern Balkans in the 1540s and 1560s amounts to 1 767 people (along with the falconers from the Vidin Sanjak). Of these, 1,310 are Christians (74%) and 457 are Muslims (26%). This probably reflects the most significant rise of the number of falconers in Rumelia during the so-called “classical period” of the Ottoman Empire when hunting with raptors was most popular in the Ottoman court.