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Development of Mining in Sakar Mountain in the 15th and 16th Centuries. Demographic and economic Characteristics of the Population engaged in Ore Mining and Metalworking

(Abstract)

The present study is based on unpublished Ottoman tax registers (*tapu tahrir defterleri*) kept at the collections of the Ottoman Archive in Istanbul (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*). The author aims to identify the ethno-religious characteristics of the population engaged in ore mining and metalworking, its tax liabilities and economic activity.

From the late 15th c. to the 1530s the region of Sakar Mountain ranked among the significant mining and metalworking centres in the Bulgarian lands, such as Samokov, Chiprovtsi, Zhelezna, Etropole, etc. Later on it gradually declined and can hardly be characterized as “significant”. This decline in ore mining in Sakar Mountain is evidenced by both the general negative demographic trend among the mining population and the fact that after the 1530s this mining population was no longer recorded as a separate group in the Ottoman registers. It is also indicative that in the 16th century the miners gradually and more and more actively engaged in parallel agricultural activity, and at the same time the mining settlements began to fall away from the sultan’s *hasses* and were assigned different status (*timars, mülks, vakıfs*).

Keywords: Sakar Mountain, 15th–16th century, Ottoman tax registers, ore-miners.

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