

The Mobility in the Ottoman Higher Education – I: The ‘Cerr’ as a Madrasa Student’s Activity

Osmanlı Yükseköğreniminde Hareketlilik – I: Medrese Öğrenci Aktivitesi Olarak ‘Cerr’

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Abstract: *This paper is about the cerr, a student mobility in the Ottoman madrasa. The cerr, in general, refers to travels from madrasas in cities, especially in Istanbul, to villages, towns and cities in the countryside in the Ottoman State. Although the cerr is generally seen as an internship for students, it is understood that the economic dimension of the said mobility predominates. In this article, two important elements of the cerr will be discussed and a different perspective will be offered. Therefore, it will be focused on an understanding that the cerr is a student mobility that is shaped by economic concerns and has economic goals. Thus, a new point of view and result will be presented on the basis of archival documents. Archival sources and secondary studies were used for the study. The data obtained from archival sources and secondary research works showing the general approach were compared. The results obtained show that the economic identity of the cerr becomes more visible as time passes. Especially with the 19th century, it is understood that the profession transformed with the bureaucratic structuring and took on a new identity.*

Keywords: *Islamic History, Higher Education, Ottomans, Madrasa, Mobility, Student.*

Öz: Bu çalışma Osmanlı medreselerindeki bir öğrenci hareketliliği olan cerr hakkındadır. Başta İstanbul olmak üzere başka şehirlerdeki medreselerden taşradaki köy, kasaba ve kentlere doğru yapılan seyahatler ifade etmektedir. Genel olarak cerr öğrenciler için staj olarak görülse de söz konusu hareketliliğin ekonomik boyutunun ağır bastığı anlaşılmaktadır. Bu makalede cerrin iki önemli unsuru tartışılacak ve farklı bir bakış açısı teklif edilecektir. Dolayısıyla cerrin ekonomik kaygıların şekillendirdiği ve ekonomik hedefleri olan bir öğrenci hareketliliği olduğuna ilişkin bir anlayış üzerinde durulacaktır. Böylece arşiv belgelerinden yola çıkılarak cerre ilişkin yeni bir bakış açısı ve sonuç ortaya konulacaktır. Çalışma için başta arşiv kaynakları ile ikincil çalışmalar kullanılmıştır. Arşiv kaynaklarından elde edilen veriler ile genel yaklaşımı gösteren ikincil araştırma eserleri mukayese edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar cerrin zaman geçtikçe ekonomik kimliğinin daha görünür kıldığını göstermektedir. Özellikle 19. yüzyıl ile cerrin bürokratik yapılanma ile dönüşerek yeni bir kimliğine büründüğü anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam Tarihi, Yükseköğrenim, Osmanlılar, Medrese, Hareketlilik, Öğrenci.

Introduction

Higher education constitutes an important part of the Ottoman educational history. In this respect, madrasas constitute the Ottoman higher education. The Ottoman madrasas have been interested in historical studies for a long time and researches have been done on them. Studies on the history of the madrasa have become widespread in the fields of works that are usually taught as textbooks and their contents, the life stories of famous *muderrises* [muderris-scholar], madrasa architecture and similar areas. However, considering the Ottoman higher education together with other sub-fields and other applications will allow a new perspective. In order for the Ottoman higher education to be handled independently, sub-sections will need to be expanded in an interdisciplinary manner in the Ottoman education history.

The mobility of the students in the Ottomans cannot be ignored. Because whether or not the mobility is military, cultural or economic, there can be no doubt that it is a mechanism that operates extremely synchronized with the Ottoman social, economic, sociological and cultural change. In this respect, it is the activities of people who make up history on a large scale, making human mobility an extremely indispensable resource. Human mobilization becomes one of the most important issues to be understood, since this mobility, which is mentioned in the background of everything that comes to mind and is the source of history. It is inconceivable that student mobility, which is an important part of human mobility, should be separated from this explanation. Therefore, in understanding the Ottoman history, in addition to individual travels, war expeditions, commercial cruises, and merchant activities, the regular and irregular mobility of students within the borders of the Ottoman State corresponds to an important social mobility.

It can be argued that student mobility in the world in general and in the Ottomans in particular provides important data in understanding the course of history. Because behind the physical mobility of an age group called students lie many political, economic, cultural and social changes and transformations. This is also the case for the cerr. Subjecting the students' travels to a semantic archeology, first in the city they live in and then to distant settlements for their livelihood, will undoubtedly contribute to some extent in showing the mobility in the Ottoman order. The cerr derives its importance from these complex relationships, which it establishes considerably.

Although the reasons are different the student mobility in the Ottoman State. Of course, this mobility is one of the features that the madrasa system has brought with it since its first establishment. Even though the cerr shows important structural differences, it should be remembered as one of the most original practices of the Islamic science tradition, which will be called *rihlah* [الرحلة], that the Ashab al-Suffa came to Medina al-Munawwarah from different lands to learn about Islam, and risked traveling for this purpose. Demonstrating student mobility both here and in the Ottoman madrasa system, which has different roots as pointed out above, and looking at the system from a different perspective will allow both understanding and establishing relations.

In this paper, the concepts briefly mentioned above will be emphasized and their relations with each other at various levels will be discussed. The emergence of the cerr as a student mobilization will be emphasized, and the ties of the Ottomans with other economic, cultural and social institutions will be discussed. For these objectives, this study can be accepted as an archeology study on the cerr. In this study, in which the subject of the cerr is discussed, firstly metaphors will be discussed, then the reasons behind the cerr will be discussed. The change of the cerr over the centuries will be shown with short emphases, the change from the 16th century to the 19th century and the differentiation in the Ottoman perception about this will be examined. The claims in the secondary sources about what the cerr is will be examined, and a new approach will be tried to be brought to the cerr by interpreting the archival documents. Thus, it will be tried to draw a framework for student mobility, which is an important institution in the Ottoman higher education. Because in this way, it will be tried to present a new proposal for the definition of student mobility called the cerr, and it will be discussed that student mobility is an important institution in social and economic life as well as the Ottoman higher education.

1. The Cerr in the Dictionary and the Historical Background

Dictionary Meaning of the Cerr

The cerr had different meanings in the history of the Ottoman madrasa. One of these meanings is terminological and refers to the quantity and visible form of

student mobility. The other meaning refers to the nature of student mobilization, its real meaning. In this respect, the word *cerr* refers to both the shaping of the vocational formation of the students and the mechanism behind this formation. The word *cerr* is roughly the name given to the students of the Ottoman madrasas [initially registered only in Istanbul madrasas] who go to villages and towns outside Istanbul to preach and pray during the months of Rajab, Shaban and Ramadan, which are called 'the Three Months' and are believed to be sacred. As indicated above, these trips of students have two identities: One of these identities is internship in terms of applying what they learned in the madrasa, as it is often repeated in the sources. The second is that they can earn cash and in-kind incomes that will provide their living for the remaining 9 months during this internship.

Meanings of the Cerr at the Ottoman Higher Education

The meanings of the word *cerr* related to the mobilization of madrasa students are mostly seen in dictionaries written in the Ottoman period. This probably has something to do with the changing meaning and quality of the word *cerr* over time. In this context, some of the general dictionaries include the following definitions for *cerr*: In the *Kamus-ı Türki*, "... *Science students gathering the amount required for their livelihood by fulfilling preaching and other similar tasks in the three months.*"¹ In the *Lugat-ı Ebuzziya*, "*to go to the cerre: The term used by science [madrasa] students to collect money and supplies for towns and villages in the three months.*"²

Along with the dictionary meaning, it is also possible to consider the meaning that has changed over time as an insistent demand. The most important background of this idea lies in the fact that the madrasa students, especially criticized by the 19th century intellectuals, turned the *cerr* into an activity similar to begging and spread throughout the country as persistent groups. Because, as it will be seen in the following sections, the fact that either students or people dressed as students spread across the country on various occasions and seek to gain benefits unjustly was perceived as an attack on the quality of madrasas. Since this style could not be closely related to the madrasa or to learning science, it was regarded as shameful and inappropriate.

Reşad Ekrem Koçu also means the *cerr*, which is an Arabic word and means to pull, to drag, as well as to bring the far away closer.³ The *cerr* indirectly implies that it has a negative content in the sense of metaphorically entering the dictionary. Because he records that the word 'cerra' is used for persistent demanding in

1 Ş. Sami, *Kamus-ı Türki* (Dersaadet: İkdâm Matbaası, 1317), 372.

2 Ebuzziya Tevfik, *Lugat-ı Ebuzziya* (Konstantiniyye: Matbaa-i Ebuzziya, 1306), 386.

3 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1965), 7/3495.

return for the symbolic meaning of begging.⁴ Moreover, it is understood that this word was used for the people who came to Istanbul to ask for aid [iane]. If this claim is based on the article about the return of the beggars who came to Istanbul from Mecca and Medina for the cerr, it can be said that the certification literally means begging and collecting money.⁵ Already in the Ottoman period, aid collection and begging were formed as an institution. So much so that it is known that those who are in begging activity, beggars, are given 'the cerr paper' in terms of these activities when their situation is determined.⁶

Regarding the negative examples above, cerr's meaning can also be established both within the scope of its dictionary meaning and with tradition. Although it is not easy for the cerr to be evaluated within the scope of science learning activity, it seems possible to establish a connection with rihle for student mobility. Because rahle is travels made with the intention of learning knowledge.⁷ During these travels, the student visits different madrasas and ribats and spends time there. He meets new people during his scientific journey. He attains maturity over time by learning new information from other teachers on his way to reach his goal. This process is not a program with a predetermined content, a curriculum, and a diploma at the end. However, it is a method that emerged with life and directly corresponds to 'non-formal education'. Therefore, it is extremely meaningful to try to understand or compare cerr with rahle, which is one of the classical Islamic learning ways. Mosques, especially *mihrabs*, have always continued to be an important education center in the Islamic world.⁸

The following definition of Reşad Ekrem Koçu can be said to be a short and concise explanation in terms of giving a general idea about cerr: "*Thousands of students who studied religious sciences in hundreds of madrasas in Istanbul were invited to lead prayers and preach in villages and small towns in Anatolia and Rumelia, during the months of Rajab, Shaban and Ramadan, which the people call "three months" according to the Hijri calendar, during which education was also cut in madrasas they would disperse, and in return for these services, they would collect food and money from the people of the villages and towns they went to; this was also called the cerr in madrasa slang, to go to cerre [cerre gitmek]; they were also called 'the softa of cerr', 'the molla of cerr' in the country's language.*"⁹ However, it is understood today that new additions should be made to the above definition and the approach about the cerr needs to be differentiated.

4 Koçu, *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 7/3496.

5 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Cevdet Maliye [C.ML]*, 187/7786.

6 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Mühimme Defterleri [A.{DVNSMHH.d}]*, 31/69.

7 İbrahim Hatiboğlu, "Rihle", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1998), 35/106-108.

8 Hatim Mahamid, "Mosques as Higher Educational Institutions in Mamluk Syria", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20/2 (2009), 208-209.

9 Koçu, *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 7/3495.

2. The Cerr

Place and time have a close relationship with man. The relationship leads to the development of history, experience and understanding of existence. Because physical existence causes the production of abstract understandings.¹⁰ Learning activity is the result of this abstract perception. The concept of the cerr is directly related to all the concepts mentioned above.

Within the scope of Ottoman history, the cerr has been dealt with only as a technical detail. The general approach is that the cerr finds an area of application for madrasa students' knowledge. According to another approach to the cerr, it is also seen that it is claimed that the knowledge learned in the cerr, madrasas is shared with the society in this way.¹¹ It can be said that this is possible. Thus, madrasas can be seen as the dissemination of Ottoman intellectual sources of legitimacy. However, further studies are needed to determine whether the cerr has such a political purpose.

Frankly, it cannot be said how the cerr should be understood as an institution without focusing on the economic and sociological dimension of the cerr. Because the cerr is a subject that is very prone to be related to the personal lives of students rather than being an extension of the madrasa education and its complement. Moreover, due to the fact that madrasas are law schools, it will be difficult to put them in the framework when the theoretical background of madrasa education is known. It can be said that students studying in madrasas as law schools are much more likely to be a qadi [judge] than to preach their professional formations. Yes; Although it is known that some graduates of lower level madrasas demand the duties of *imams* and *hatips* [orators], the fact that the cerr started in Istanbul makes it necessary to ask the above questions again.

Despite the cerr's connection with the Ottoman higher education and its pedagogical meanings, at least in the 16th and 17th centuries, no clear, direct and indirect information on the subject can be found in the laws on *ilmiye* nor in the biographies of important scholars. Although the laws and provisions on *ilmiye* usually include details about how the hierarchy should work, along with assignments and books to be read, there is no regulation about the cerr. Likewise, the regulations of Fatih Sultan Mehmed and Süleyman the Magnificent, which coincide with two major transformations for the Ottoman higher education, do not contain information in this regard. Obviously, there is hope in the biographies of scientists that it is possible to access this information, albeit indirectly.

The most important evidence that will make the cerr meaningful for Ottoman higher education can be obtained from documents and sources, especially from

10 Suzanne Bott et al. "Place and Promise of Conservation Psychology," *Research in Human Ecology* 10/2 (2003), 100.

11 Hüseyin Atay, *Osmanlılarda Yüksek Din Eğitimi* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1983), 142.

the 16th and later 17th century. The reason for this is that the period that gave the shape and spirit of the Ottoman higher education was the 16th century. If there is information about the mentioned periods, the theoretical framework of the cerr will be better established and the basis for subsequent applications will be established.

Therefore, it is hoped that information on the subject will be reached through qualified and in-depth research. In this respect, for now, although information about the 16th century is awaited, the only remarkable detail and information is encountered in the biography of an important scholar as late as the 19th century. The detail in question is hidden in the biography of the great scholar Ahmed Cevdet Paşa and offers some partial information to understand the truth. The practice of cerr during Paşa's studentship probably continues in its most widespread form. However, according to what he wrote, the Paşa was busy with his lessons even during the holidays, and he never went to a crime with the economic support from his family. Paşa stated that he went to the cerr twice, in the first of these he went to Lofça [Loveç] to take advantage of the holiday and to see his family, and in the second he went to Thessaloniki, Serez [Serres] and Drama for some business, as he did not say what happened with the opportunity of a holiday, but it was thought that it was not a cerr in the economic sense what he was doing.¹² Apart from these two details, there is no information about him.

It seems possible to draw attention to another feature of the cerr application in the Ottoman higher education. As it is understood from both archive documents and research works, the application of cerr is found in geographies where the Ottoman madrasa system is in practice. What is meant by this expression is that although the Ottoman madrasa system was spread over three continents, in general terms [as in the madrasas built by the Ottomans in Damascus, Mecca and Medina], the cerr concentrated on the Rumelia and Anatolian madrasas. However, there are some exceptions to these practices. For example, as stated in the document, financial aid was also provided to students in Mosul madrasas who did not have cerr practice 'as they did not have a habit' or 'because it was not known'.¹³

It is understood that generally poor, strange and without income madrasa students go to the cerr. According to Koçu's statement, in the madrasa, along with his roommates, muderrises also go to the cerr.¹⁴ Likewise, in a broader context, beggars are included in those who participate in the cerr activity. Because, according to a decree dated 1577 sent to the qadi of Istanbul, it is mentioned about the cerr group who begged in Istanbul even though they have

12 Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir: 40 – Tetimme*, ed. Cavid Baysun (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 3rd ed., 1991), 7.

13 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) *Dahiliye Nezareti Şifre Kalemi [DH.ŞFR]*, 328/3.

14 Koçu, *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 7/3496. Mehmet İpşirli, "Cer" *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1993), 7/388.

no rights. It is understood that this group takes disabled and sick people with them to make them feel sorry for themselves, and it is understood that they are begging in shabby clothes, that they should never be allowed, and that whatever is necessary should be done.¹⁵ In another provision, it is strictly reminded that suhte groups participate in the cerr activity by using their relatives and relatives, but they are always obliged to engage in science.¹⁶

From the point of view of the Ottoman higher education, the paragraph quoted from Koçu above can be included here again, as it gives the general framework about who goes to the cerr: *"Thousands of students who studied religious sciences in hundreds of madrasas in Istanbul were invited to lead prayers and preach in villages and small towns in Anatolia and Rumelia, during the months of Rajab, Shaban and Ramadan, which the people call "three months" according to the Hijri calendar, during which education was also cut in madrasas they would disperse, and in return for these services, they would collect food and money from the people of the villages and towns they went to; this was also called the cerr in madrasa slang, to go to cerr [cerre gitmek]; they were also called 'cerr softası', 'cer mollası' in the country's language."*¹⁷

However, it is understood that in time, irregular people joined the madrasa students who went to ceremonies. Of course, this mess has ended badly. The irregulars, including the suhte, are causing rebellion and defeat in Anatolia. It is learned that irregular groups, including some madrasa students who have gathered in front of the madrasa for various reasons or thought that their rights have been violated, tortured the people in villages and towns and took what they had by force. Already, as supported by a provision dated 1586, the irregulars do whatever it takes to make themselves look like students. For example, in order to provide legitimacy for money and goods extorted from the people, they call it *'zekat akçesi'* by dressing it in a religious image.¹⁸ In another example, it is understood in the research conducted according to Emir Haydar's petition that it was reported that these people wore dervish clothes such as belts and belts and went out alone, even though they had no rights, and that these people were unjustly preaching to the public. According to this petition, in an edict sent to the Damascus qadi, it is requested to prevent this cerr group.¹⁹

3. The Cerr in the Ottoman Higher Education

Types of the Cerr

As it is understood from indirect literature on the subject, four cerrs can be mentioned. It is not related to the differentiation of the cerrs and the nature of the

15 BOA, A.{DVNSMHHM.d}, 31/69.

16 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Mühimmemme Defterleri* [A.{DVNSMHHM.d}], 7/1706.

17 Koçu, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 7/3495.

18 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Mühimmemme Defterleri* [A.{DVNSMHHM.d}], 61/43.

19 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Mühimmemme Defterleri* [A.{DVNSMHHM.d}], 15/59.

activities. Perhaps the only reason for the emergence of the cerr species is due to the functionalization of the cerr, which is an economic activity, at appropriate times. Because the madrasa, which is put into practice outside the cerr class, is an activity out of education. There were four kind of cerr that they are the 'Hafta Cerri' [the Week Cerr], 'Üç Aylar Cerri' [the Three Months Cerr], 'Kurban Cerri' [the Feast of Sacrifice Cerr] and 'Harman Cerri' [the Harvest Cerr].

The week cerr is not mentioned in the literature, albeit indirectly. However, it is understood from both the edict about the cerrar²⁰ and the statement in the Kanunname-i Ehl-i Hiref that madrasa students go to cerr' as well as beggars on weekdays. Again, as it is understood from the same sources, this type of the cerr is the one that is done in the city and on the days when there is no lesson in the madrasas.²¹

In terms of the history of the madrasa, the main examination is made in the Three Months; This cerr is also called the Ramadan cerr. The aforementioned cerr spreads to the months of Rajab, Shaban and Ramadan, which make up the Three Months, but finds its true meaning in the month of Ramadan. Therefore, it is understood that sometimes they set out on the 15th of Rajab and sometimes in the month of Shaban.²²

Another cerr is named after the feast and is called the Feast of Sacrifice Cerr.²³ There is not enough information about it. However, it is likely that it will be held in the surrounding towns and cities on this holiday, when the madrasas are holidayed. Another possible issue is that the students tried to collect sadaka [alms] and provisions based on the religious significance of this month.

As it is understood from the Ottoman archival documents, there is a fourth type of cerr. It is understood that some people went to Romania dressed as students for the cerr, and here, at the beginning of each blend, they collected a large amount of money from the people under the name of 'the Harman Cerri'. Being at the cerr in student attire is likely to be an income-oriented behavior. For example, a document dated 1910 sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out this situation. Precautions are requested as some people in 'student clothes' from Konya, Ankara and Sivas were trying to go to Varna.²⁴ However, it is understood that the government was trying to take measures with the thought that this situation would lead to various problems in the future.²⁵

20 BOA, A.[DVNSMHH.d], 15/59.

21 Ahmet Uysal, *Zanaatkarlar Kanunu (Kanun-nâme-i Ehl-i Hiref)* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1982), 94.

22 Abdülkadir Erdoğan, "Konyada Eski Medrese ve Medreseliler", *Konya* 2/4-25 (1938), 1320.

23 Mustafa Ergün, "II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Medreselerin Durumu ve Islâh Çalışmaları", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 30/1-2 (1982), 71.

24 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Dahiliye Nezareti Sicill-i Nüfus Tahrirat Kalemi [DH.SN.THR], 11/17.

25 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi* [DH.MKT], 1137/59.

The Cerr's Time

Students were educated in madrasas in accordance with the conditions of the founder of the waqf, and the courses were determined according to these conditions. Holidays are reserved for students for various needs outside of classes. Holiday days are determined as weekly and annual. Weekly holidays were determined as Friday in almost all madrasas, and that day was accepted as a holiday for students to copy their books, pray and other personal needs. There are different practices in the Ottoman madrasas within the framework of the wishes of the founders of the waqfs. For example, in addition to Friday, Tuesday and Thursday were also considered holidays.²⁶ Likewise, the holy days, which were considered important in the Ottoman society, were also considered holidays. As mentioned in the sources, the annual holiday was limited to Ramadan and the Sacrifice Feast, and the annual holidays were held in the Three Months.²⁷

The first and general arrangement for the operation of the cerr within a program probably coincides with the middle of the 16th century. According to an order recorded in the Mühimme Defteris, it must have been planned to arrange for the suhte to go to the cerr in 1569. As it is understood from the order in question, it is understood that some of them were begging by taking the disabled and the like. Likewise, those who go to the cerr with these and similar intentions and beggars are walking around with false and false information. Therefore, such negative examples should be prohibited. The most important part of the provision on the subject is the part of the cerr about suhteler. According to this, since the suhte are studying science, it is requested that 'they are not allowed to go to the cerr except for the holiday they go to the cerr only, as is the case with the old times', and thus the limits of the practice are determined.²⁸ A link can be established between this order and 'the Kanunname of Ehl-i Hıref'. Because with this law, it is understood that the cerr, which can be thought to start in the city, is limited to certain days of the week, and these days coincide with Tuesday and Thursday, which are the weekly holidays of the madrasas.²⁹

For the reasons explained above, there is a close relationship between the cerr and the holiday of the madrasas. In this respect, it should be said that cerr is an activity related to time. Although the boundaries are not sharp, the cerr is reached within the specified time frame. In this respect, the cerr, Rajab which is the beginning of the Three Months, must also be the beginning. Classes are suspended during this period, and as can be understood from a document dated

26 Cemal Tukin, "Yakın Çağ Tarihimizde Hafta Ta'tili", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 1/1 (1949), 140. Cahid Baltacı, *XV-XVI. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Medreseleri* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2005), 1/128. Mefail Hızlı, *Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre Osmanlı Klasik Dönemi Bursa Medreselerinde Eğitim ve Öğretim* (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2nd ed., 2012), 165.

27 Hızlı, *Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre Osmanlı Klasik Dönemi Bursa Medreselerinde Eğitim ve Öğretim*, 167.

28 BOA, A.[DVNSMHH.d], 7/1706.

29 Uysal, *Zanaatkarlar Kanunu (Kanun-nâme-i Ehl-i Hıref)*, 94.

1848, students go to the countryside to collect supplies.³⁰ However, although most of the activities planned in the cerr are aimed at the month of Ramadan, the lack of transportation opportunities in addition to the width of the Ottoman lands necessitates an early departure. In this respect, it is necessary to set out at the beginning of the month of Rajab or before the 15th of Shaban, depending on the distance of the destination.³¹ Rajab, who will be accepted as the beginning of the cerr journey, is announced with a calligraphy. When the crescent moon is seen, a calligraphy is published, so it is understood that the Three Months has entered. Thus, the beginning of the cerr activities are also determined.³² An interesting anecdote about the cerr period is related to the Darülfünun [university]. Since the students selected for the Darülfünun, which was reopened in 1869, were students of the madrasa, the school was opened late due to the cerr. At that time, the start of the lessons in Darülfünun was postponed to the return of the students, since the students were out of Istanbul for the cerr.³³

The above-mentioned time periods are related to Ramadan or, in its broad definition, the Three Months Cerr.³⁴ Because it is learned that there are also ceremonies outside of the Three Months and especially Ramadan. Apart from this, since other cerr activities were created during the calendar year, their times were also created differently. As mentioned above, as other procedures, "the Harman Cerr" and 'The Feast of Sacrifice Cerr' should be determined as the cerr times other than three months. As the name suggests, the Harvest Cerr is the harvesting and processing period of the crops, which is the threshing time, and The Feast of Sacrifice Cerr is performed during the Feast of Sacrifice. The cerr periods other than Three Months Cerr can be defined as short time periods for economic purposes.

In general, it can be said that the cerr period begins when the Three Months approaches, or '*tekarrüb ettiğinde*' [recours] as it is mentioned in the documents. It is understood that a number of procedures must be fulfilled in order for the cerr to be implemented. The first of the regulations is to get permission to go to the cerr, and it is seen that the students should get permission to go to the cerr from the muderrises. While the permission was taken from the muderrises at the beginning, it is seen that he followed a path towards the madrasa administration and the Meşihat administration. According to Abdülaziz Bey, the muderrises inform those who will go to the cerr, and the students who receive '*ilm-i haber*' [the certificate] application to '*ders vekili*' [the course deputies] in Bab-ı Meşihat with these documents.³⁵

30 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Divan-ı Hümayun Beylikçi Kalemî [A.]DVN*, 35/67.

31 Hızlı, *Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre Osmanlı Klasik Dönemi Bursa Medreselerinde Eğitim ve Öğretim*, 167.

32 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Hatt-ı Hümayun [HAT]*, 203/10540.

33 Osman Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi* (Istanbul: Eser Kültür Yayınları, 1977), 1-2/554. Yahya Akyüz, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi: M.Ö. 1000 – M.S. 2011* (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 20th ed., 2011), 169.

34 İpşirli, "Cer", 388.

35 Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri: Âdât ve Merâsim-i Kadime, Tabirât ve Muamelât-ı Kavmiye-i Osmaniye*, ed. Kâzım Arısan and Duygu Arısan Günay (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları), 1995), 78.

For example, Mehmed Efendi, one of the students of Dülgerzade Hoca Şemseddin Madrasa, asked permission to go to Alexandria to collect provisions in the Three Months of 1848.³⁶ Because, together with going to the cerr, the concept of icazet is mentioned about how to do this. It is stated that as the month of Rajab approaches, the situation of obtaining ratification in madrasas arises. Those who received this license also dispersed to the provinces for the cerr.³⁷ It is stated that the most important issue in the issue of licensing or permission is to arrive at the destination as soon as possible and to find a mosque with a congregation.³⁸ However, the Harvest Cerr is related to a 15-day period, it is stated that this certificate has not been approved.³⁹ It can be said that muderrises who do not give permission for the cerr were gossiped by the suhtes.⁴⁰

Before the Cerr

After licensing and permission, the second important issue for students was about getting reference letters called recommendation. Although there was no development and information in this direction until the 19th century, it can be claimed that there were also recommendations regarding the institutionalization that emerged after the said century. In general, '*tavsiyename'* [the recommendation] written for the administrators in the target settlement [addressed to the mufti, district governor or relevant officials at the destination] is to facilitate the student.⁴¹ Reference letters, called recommendation letters, are the documents that students try to get from the muderrises or the administrators, depending on the situation, with the petitions they write.⁴² For example, in his petition signed as '*from student, İsmail*' in the document dated 1849, it is understood that he would go to Drama to collect supplies for the student, so a recommendation was requested to be written dedicated to the district governor of Drama.⁴³ In this case, the recommendations requested from the Meşihat, in addition, it is seen that information was given to the relevant provinces through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. For example, it is understood from another document that it is understood that Mehmed Efendi, who will go to Trabzon for the Three Months, was asked to facilitate.⁴⁴ The beginning in one of these recommendations is as follows: "*To the Governor of Varna, Aşir Bey. He went to*

36 Erdoğan, "Konyada Eski Medrese ve Medreseliler", 1321

37 Erdoğan, "Konyada Eski Medrese ve Medreseliler", 1320.

38 Erdoğan, "Konyada Eski Medrese ve Medreseliler", 1321

39 Erdoğan, "Konyada Eski Medrese ve Medreseliler", 1321.

40 Erdoğan, "Konyada Eski Medrese ve Medreseliler", 1321.

41 Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri: Âdât ve Merasim-i Kadime, Tabirât ve Muamelât-ı Kavmiye-i Osmaniyeye*, 78.

42 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Divan-ı Hümayun Beylikçi Kalemi [A.]DVN*, 79/23. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Divan-ı Hümayun Sadaret Kalemi [A.]MKT.UM*, 132/97. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Divan-ı Hümayun Sadaret Kalemi [A.]MKT.UM*, 527/83. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, 1613/98. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, 2055/41.

43 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Divan-ı Hümayun Beylikçi Kalemi [A.]DVN*, 47/62.

44 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, 2286/65.

your hometown to preach and give advice due to the approach of Three Months..."⁴⁵ Undoubtedly, these recommendations are given in return for the petitions of the students. Again, the following document can be given as an example for these petitions: It is stated as follows: "*To the Governorship of Ankara. Hafız Ahmed Efendi from Nevrekop is on his way to your hometown for the Three Months. Making things easier by helping him because he is poor and in need of help...*"⁴⁶

Immediately after the licensing and recommendation, the issue of free passes [mürur tezkiresi] comes to the fore as another procedure. Free pass, on the other hand, are a free pass card in the Ottoman travel system and should be seen as an arrangement to facilitate students' travel.⁴⁷ In these letters, information about students is given, their physical characteristics are noted, and an identification standard is established for their recognition. It is understood that passports were added to the free pass documents in the 19th century. Especially with the intention of going to the Balkan states that left the Ottoman State, students' passport requests are also encountered.⁴⁸ It is understood that even after the Balkan Wars, some places that left the Ottoman lands continued to be visited for the cerr. For example, one of these places is Bulgaria, and it is understood that İshak bin İsmail from Kirmasti, Bursa, caused various problems in the country where he was in Bulgaria in 1903 with a '*muntazam pasaport*' [regular passport].⁴⁹

It is understood that a number of records have been created on the mobility of students. There is no information on whether these records were in the early periods. However, it has been seen that the names of the students have been recorded in the official document recently. In this context, it is understood that the names of the students who came to Istanbul from the provinces for the cerr were recorded in the book.⁵⁰ As a result, it is understood that a database has been created in terms of both the recording and tracking of students and security. Although it is not clear from the expression '*those who go to the cerr*' whether they are beggars or students, recording *cerrar* [beggars] in the name book was an ordinary form of record keeping in the Ottoman practice. As a result, as stated above, the names of those who went to the cerr were recorded in a book, and two copies were made from these notebooks. One of the copies of the book was kept by the qadis and the other copy was kept by the subaşı.⁵¹ Because is that,

45 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Divan-ı Hümayun Sadaret Kalemî* [A.]MKT.UM], 447/35.

46 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası* [BEO], 1589/119143.

47 For further information, also see: Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı Belgelerinin Dili (Diplomatik)* (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Akademisi Kültür ve San'at Vakfı, 1994), 254.

48 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Hariciye Nezareti İrade* [HR.İD], 63/35.

49 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Hariciye Nezareti Şifre Kalemî* [HR.SFR], 04. 436/74. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Hariciye Nezareti Şifre Kalemî* [HR.SFR], 04. 623/56.

50 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Yıldız Sarayı Perakende Evrakı Arzuhal ve Journaller* [Y.PRK.AZJ], 8/21.

51 Koçu also refers to the relevant edict of 1574 regarding bookkeeping and the fact that one of the copies of the book remains in the kadi and the other in the subaşı. Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Dilenciler", *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası* 3 (1970), 28

according to a decree dated 1577, 'the cerr certificates' are given meticulously to beggars and it is understood that those who take the cerr certificates are followed closely.⁵²

It can be assumed that the students, whose names were recorded in the book after obtaining permission, set out later. As discussed above, the routes used by students during the journey must have diversified over time, as they underwent some changes from the 16th century to the 19th century. However, what is wanted to be pointed out in this section is that the state pays the travel expenses incurred by the students when they go to and from the towns and villages they target for the cerr, as well as the freight charges in addition to these expenses. In the 19th century, it can be said clearly and unequivocally that the state paid attention to meet the travel expenses of the students within the limits of its possibilities. Transport costs, both on the ship and on the rail, are subsidized either at a discount or in full payment.

When the documents produced by the Ottoman bureaucracy regarding the registration of student names are carefully examined, two points draw attention. In this respect, it is understood that as time passes, the cerr mobility of students is tried to be transformed into an institution. Yes; students in the Ottoman madrasas are required to obtain permission documents from the muderrises before the cerr, and it is seen that printed documents are added to these documents over time. For example, the following note recorded in the introductory part of a book belonging to the month of Rajab in 1861 is interesting: "*The names and other information of the students who brought the matnu permission document, which will be given 50 kuruş for going to the countryside, have been declared above.*"⁵³ As it can be understood from this information, the students present the printed documents they receive from their madrasas [probably instead of the permissions they received from the muderrises], and in return they receive 50 kuruş in aid.

Activities at the Cerr

No direct archive document has been found about the types of activities related to what was done at the cerr. Again, as it is often repeated in an archive documents, the cerr is defined as 'giving prayer and giving advice'. Therefore, although it has an economic meaning for students, it can be stated that education is non-formal education for the public with the simplest definition. Students continue their activities in madrasas, schools and mosques.⁵⁴ In this respect, it is understood that when the students reach their destinations, they

52 BOA, A.İDVNSMHM.d., 31/69.

53 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Maliye Nezareti Masarifat Muhasebecliği Defterleri [ML.MSF.d]*, 15585.

54 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *İrade Hususi [İ.HUS]*, 97/40.

lead prayers,⁵⁵ preach and advice, teach the basic rules of the religion of Islam⁵⁶ and read the Qur'an.⁵⁷ Moreover, as stated in one source, they read books such as the *Muhammediye*, the *Ahmediye* and the *Envarü'l-Aşikin*, which are known, read and loved by the people at night.⁵⁸ Therefore, in addition to these activities, it can be assumed that they also read books that are common among the people in terms of their prevalence, although there is no evidence on this matter.⁵⁹

It is learned that the students of the madrasa stay in the appropriate rooms of places such as mosques, madrasa, schools or in the houses of notables and prominent people in the villages, towns and towns where they are during the cerr.⁶⁰ The madrasa students in the cerr eat their meals in these places where they stay, and are invited to dinner by the village or town's notables during the Ramadan nights like '*sahur*' [the meal before dawn in Ramadan]. According to Abdülaziz Bey, it is understood that in some evenings, the meals are sent to the students' homes. When the cerr ends, when they return to their schools, it is seen that the local people help the students with food, money, clothes and laundry.⁶¹

It is also witnessed that cerrin was used for political purposes in the 19th century. The fact that the cerr has spread throughout the country as a widespread institution must have brought to mind the benefit of this institution. It is understood that this instrumental value of the cerrin was used especially during the '*Meşrutiyet Era*' [Constitutional Era]. Thus, it is known that the Constitutional Monarchy was explained by the students who were scattered on the field.⁶² For this reason, it would be appropriate to evaluate the procedure as a consent generation mechanism.

As mentioned above, it is seen that the cerrin is used for a political purpose. It was deemed appropriate to adopt political steps to the public for students studying in Istanbul madrasas scattered all over the country with the cerr. In this context, it is seen that the students of the madrasas who are ceremonial are benefited from. "*Mustafa Sabri Efendi, who gave advice to the students who will spread to Anatolia and Rumelia, to warm the hearts of the people to the*

55 Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri: Âdât ve Merasim-i Kadime, Tabirât ve Muamelât-ı Kavmiye-i Osmaniye*, 78. Hızlı, *Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre Osmanlı Klasik Dönemi Bursa Medreselerinde Eğitim ve Öğretim*, 167.

56 Hızlı, *Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre Osmanlı Klasik Dönemi Bursa Medreselerinde Eğitim ve Öğretim*, 167.

57 Hızlı, *Mahkeme Sicillerine Göre Osmanlı Klasik Dönemi Bursa Medreselerinde Eğitim ve Öğretim*, 167.

58 Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri: Âdât ve Merasim-i Kadime, Tabirât ve Muamelât-ı Kavmiye-i Osmaniye*, 78.

59 For detailed information, see: Mustafa Kara, "XIV. ve XV. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı Toplumunu Besleyen Türkçe Kitaplar", *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 8/1 (1999), 130-148. Ali İhsan Karataş, "XVI. Yüzyılda Bursa'da Tedavüldeki Kitaplar", *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1071 (2001), 209-230.

60 Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri: Âdât ve Merasim-i Kadime, Tabirât ve Muamelât-ı Kavmiye-i Osmaniye*, 78-79.

61 Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Âdet, Merasim ve Tabirleri: Âdât ve Merasim-i Kadime, Tabirât ve Muamelât-ı Kavmiye-i Osmaniye*, 79.

62 Recai Doğan, "Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Yaygın Din Eğitiminde Vaaz ve Vaizlik", *Diyanet Dini Dergi* 35/1 (1999), 178.

Constitution, to explain that the constitutional administration is in accordance with the Sharia, to list its benefits, to enlighten the ideas of the common people who do not even understand the differences between the Constitution and tyranny. It attaches importance to reducing the influence of the dissidents after emphasizing the necessity of it.”⁶³

The Change of the Cerr

It is observed that the quality of the cerr issue began to change after the 19th century. It is seen that the religious duties of the cerr gradually changed and the duties of being a battalion imam, a civil service position of the *tadad-ı ağnam* [counting sheep and goats] and the *aşar memurluğu* [tithe] became among the students' jobs. It is also encountered that it is given upon request for advice for a civil service position of counting sheep and goats.⁶⁴

One such example can be cited as the bid made by Ömer Efendi of Amasya, one of the students of Yenikapı Musalla Madrasa, İstanbul, for the 'tender to his responsibility' of the civil service of counting sheep and goats in Izmit, with the knowledge he received from the madrasa.⁶⁵ In another document, Mehmed Tevfik Efendi, a student of the Şehid Mehmed Paşa Madrasa, demanded the duty of a tithe in Çatalca instead of going to the cerr, which can be understood as an indication that the quality of the court began to change.⁶⁶ With these documents, it is understood that the students may have used this way to become a civil servant, and that in the case of the cerr, the students started to prefer regular jobs like civil servants rather than collecting supplies for income. Of course, it is necessary to distinguish whether these works are done temporarily and during the holiday period as in the cerr.

It can be said that students tend to move towards civil service or similar permanent jobs. After a while, the duties of preacher and imam in the cerr were replaced by the duties of imam and preacher in the military units during Ramadan, as it was recommended for students.⁶⁷ Students' preference for jobs that are considered to be personal rights, rather than the focus of criticism, can be read together with Ottoman modernization in a way. Probably, it must have started to turn into regular jobs and civil service afterwards. Because it seems to have ended with the proclamation of the Republic. As a result, according to many documents, it is understood that the disease continued in the Republican

63 Doğan, "Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Yaygın Din Eğitiminde Vaaz ve Vaizlik", 178.

64 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, 1798/96. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, 1911/8.

65 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, 2048/ 41.

66 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemi [DH.MKT]*, 1340/97.

67 Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Yıldız Sarayı Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı [Y.MTV]*, 58/59. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Yıldız Sarayı Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı [Y.MTV]*, 75/157. Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evrakı [Y.A.HUS]*, 257/23.

period.⁶⁸ Afterwards, with the establishment of an organization to carry out religious affairs in the settlements, there was no need for an application similar to cerr, and it ended after a while.⁶⁹ Because after the new type of schools opened after the Tanzimat, the fact that the children went to different schools and that the surgeon was not welcomed seems to be a turning point.⁷⁰ Likewise, it can be stated that this situation is a result of the modernization of education and the discussions between the Tanzimat Period and the Ottoman elites. Thus, while education is modernizing, the field of education is differentiated, as in the Darülfünun, and the madrasa is being devoted to the religious field.

Conclusion

It seems possible to obtain three distinct results from [the cerr], which is the mobility of students in the Ottoman higher education. One of these results is about the quality of education in madrasas. The second is related to the nature of the underlying causes of the cerr. So much so that, contrary to popular belief, it has been understood that there may be other reasons other than the idea of education. The third and final result is related to the connection of the cerr with today.

When considering the Ottoman higher education, reviewing other possibilities besides the usual patterns will strengthen the understanding. The strengthening of the understanding will pave the way for more accurate judgments on the madrasa and the issues related to the madrasa. Because while working on the Ottoman higher education, purely institutional history study will not facilitate the establishment of connections. However, when it comes to the history of the Ottoman education, many more issues need to be related to each other. Then it will be easier to understand the Ottoman mentality more deeply.

The results of the research show that students studying and living in madrasas have been in an intense activity since at least the 16th century. It is very remarkable that students live outside the madrasas and far away when they enter the holiday period. Although it is expressed as an internship program, it is possible to say that the cerr has other compulsory explanations. However, the most important point here is that the Ottoman madrasa students sometimes showed a positive and sometimes negative presence in the society. Experiencing this mobility in a time like the 16th century when logistics and transportation facilities were inadequate will have various consequences. In this respect, it would not be wrong to highlight the quality of the cerr other than being an educational activity.

68 Cumhuriyet Arşivi (BCA), *Diyanet İşleri Reisliği*, 13/114-21. Salih Zeki Zengin, "Kurtuluş Savaşı Döneminde ve Cumhuriyet'in Başlarında Türkiye'de Medreseler ve Din Eğitimi", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* XLII/2 (2002), 306.

69 İpşirli, "Cer", 389.

70 Koçu, *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 7/3496.

Whether related to education or not, the cerr's main salient feature in society is human mobility. Because this kind of activity is extremely meaningful for the 16th century. So much so that a similar mobility has been experienced in the European universities. Especially in the 16th century, the movement in Istanbul, and right after it, from Istanbul to Rumelia and Anatolia, must have paved the way for a social transformation.

The mobility in the Ottoman higher education, on the other hand, has a social background and its economic quality predominates. The cerr application deserves to be perceived more as an economic and social activity rather than being related to education as it is often stated. Undoubtedly, the cerr is not an activity where students have the opportunity to apply the knowledge they have learned in madrasas. The cerr, in contrast, is an annual student economic activity that they have to endure to make a living. For this reason, cerr activities seem more worthy to be understood with economic policies and history rather than political events. So much so that its position towards the 19th century with the application of the cerr is also synchronized with the Ottoman economic transformation. In order to understand these reasons, it will be necessary to use other methods and tools in the future.

It can be a source for a program that is far from the cerr's in the Ottoman practice, but which is similar in form, which can be a source for an education dissemination program. A similar program can be designed for students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs of universities. Care can be taken to ensure that this program, which will not have an economic quality and where students' social benefit and mobility are prioritized, draws an appearance away from internships. This type of application, which will be evaluated with instruments such as course credits and ACTS, can be adapted to training programs. Thus, the inclusion of students in education and training activities in the real sector outside the cities where they study and live will make social interaction possible.

Resources

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