

# Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi, a Geographer of the Timișoara *Vilayet*

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**T**HE STUDIES published by Cengiz Orhonlu<sup>1</sup> about the life and work of Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi mention, in passing, the over 20 years that the Ottoman geographer spent in Timișoara during his childhood and youth. This period was an important part of his life, which deeply marked his personality through the teachings he received from the scholars of Timișoara.

His biography and activity as an Ottoman dignitary and geographer can be reconstituted only with the help of the details Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi interspersed in his *Atlas*. Unfortunately, the author did not mention either the year of his birth or that of his settlement, first in Ineu and later in Timișoara, where he lived for over two decades, until the city was conquered (16 October 1716) by the imperial troops commanded by Eugene of Savoy.

The only information about his birth regards its place, Enduz village, near the town of Bartın in Anatolia, situated on a spur of Mount Gökbel, in the Bolu region (*sanjak*). His family settled in the *vilayet* of Timișoara, at Ineu and then in Timișoara, following the participation of his father, Bayram, in the campaigns waged by Sultan Mustafa II (1695–1703) against the “Holy Roman-German Empire.” The author’s notes suggest that he moved to Timișoara between 1695 and 1696, this city leaving its spiritual and cultural imprint upon his personality.<sup>2</sup> In Timișoara, he did his studies and was initiated into Ottoman mysticism and, respectively, into the mysteries of the *Khalvetiyye* Order (*tariqa*). It was also here that Ibrahim Hamdi used a series of circumstances to frequently travel into the neighboring provinces, especially to Transylvania.

His coming from a family that was initiated in the science of the Quran (*ilm*) ensured his first contact with learning during his childhood. However, at the age of only 18–20 years, Ibrahim Hamdi began to take systematic classes from his head teacher, Elhadj Eyub. In the beginning he learned grammar, or morphology (*sarf*) and syntax (*nahiv*);<sup>3</sup> then, from 1713 on (1125 H), he studied the commentary of the Quran compiled by Kadi Beydavi.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, his teacher could not initiate him into Ottoman mysticism (*tasavvuf*),<sup>5</sup> and thus Ibrahim Hamdi became the disciple of Piri Ahmed Efendi from Pécs, a member of *Khalvetiyye* confraternity.<sup>6</sup> Hamdi Ibrahim also attended the public lectures (*ders-i âm*) held by Piri Ahmed Efendi at the mosque or at *medrese*. Unlike Piri Ahmed Efendi, Sheikh Selim Dede, the leader of the *Khalvetiyye* confraternity, played an important role in initiating Ibrahim Hamdi into the secrets of Ottoman mysticism, in

educational psychology and in the formation of his personality. In fact, the great renown and esteem Sultans Mustafa II and Ahmed III<sup>7</sup> had for this sheikh entitled the admiration that his disciple, Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi, openly expressed towards him.

The voyages he undertook in his youth to the neighboring provinces of the *Timișoara vilayet* and to Transylvania increased his desire to know new lands and to describe them later in the pages of his *Atlas*. Particularly interesting are, therefore, the notes about the trip to Alba-Iulia (*Erdel-i Belgrad*), which he undertook as the companion of *Zaim* Ibrahim of Niș (Nișovalı), responsible for the purchase, and then the transport of mercury ore to Timișoara and, from there, to Istanbul.<sup>8</sup> In reality, this was related to the import of mercury ore from Transylvania into the Ottoman Empire.

Just like his father, Bayram, Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi was a soldier who enrolled in 1697, the year of the Battle of Zenta, in the corps of armorers (*jebeçii*).<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, it is not known what functions Ibrahim Hamdi occupied prior to 1716, when he fought alongside the 5,000 soldiers who were besieged in the city of Timișoara by the army Eugene of Savoy led.

After conquering the city of Timișoara, Ibrahim Hamdi was transferred to the city of Tarnovo in Bulgaria and, from there, in 1720, to Hotin, where he served first as secretary of the arsenal (*jebehane*), and then, as secretary of the *defterdar* of Hotin.<sup>10</sup> The period he spent as an official in Hotin forms the best known part of his biography; after this came several unknown episodes, corresponding to the years 1727–1729, 1735–1736, and 1738–1748.<sup>11</sup> It is possible that after 1737, Ibrahim Hamdi was an official in the border towns of the Ottoman Empire until 1749, when he strove to complete his geographical work. Like C. Orhonlu, we believe that during this period, he gathered the necessary information for compiling his *Atlas*, which he revised several times even after completing the manuscript, on 26 October 1750 (25 *zil-ka'de* 1163 H).<sup>12</sup> After this date, however, the author no longer made any reference to his life and work. The notes that were subsequent to the drafting of the manuscript related to events that had happened in the years 1786–1787.<sup>13</sup>

Just like other geographical works written by his predecessors, the work of Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi is actually a cosmography, because it comprises, in addition to geographical, historical events, remarkable facts and stories of outstanding personalities in the Ottoman Empire. Initially, it had no title. It was only Bursalı Tahir<sup>14</sup> who conventionally entitled Ibrahim Hamdi's manuscript an *Atlas*, given the traditional equivalence established by Kâtib Celebi between the terms atlas and geography.

The only known version of the *Atlas* compiled by Ibrahim Hamdi is his second volume, kept in the Es'ad Efendi Fund of Istanbul's Süleymaniye Library, under reference number 2044.

The investigations conducted by C. Orhonlu reveal that this geographical work was based on a rather complex documentation for the period in which it was completed. Its author evinced great honesty and conscientiousness in the way in which he cited his sources whenever he recorded historical events or geographical observations that were not derived from his own experience.<sup>15</sup> In writing the second volume of his *Atlas*, a true historical geography of the Balkan Peninsula (*Rumeli*), Ibrahim Hamdi used an impressive number of ancient, Greek and Latin authors, whose works he knew *via* the Arab geographers.

Unlike the ancient sources known through the Arab works, the Ottoman sources offered the author much more consistent, varied and topical information for writing

his *Atlas*. Mention should be made here of fundamental Ottoman geographical works from the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the cosmography of Kâtib Celebi, *Jihannuma*, or the *Book of Navigation* (*Kitab-i Bahriye*) by Piri Reis.<sup>16</sup>

As regards geographical knowledge, Ibrahim Hamdi limited himself to information about things known and discovered in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although he valued the science of European geography, he was not aware of the additions and insights brought about by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when physical geography was founded.<sup>17</sup>

C. Orhonlu rightly emphasized the traditional and limited character of the information used by Ibrahim Hamdi, who did not know Latin and Italian. He had access only to the translation into Osman of works on European geography written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, entitled *Atlas-i Jedid-i Felemenk* (*The New Dutch Atlas*) and *Jografîya-i Jedid* (*The New Geography*). While the first case was a translation of Andreas Cellarius's work *Atlas Coelestis*,<sup>18</sup> in the second case the identification is uncertain: it may have been a translation into Osman of Jacques Robbs's work *La méthode pour apprendre facilement la géographie*, under the title *Jemnuma fî fenn-i jografîya*, or the work of general geography *Jografîya-yi jedid*, compiled by Ahmed Resmi on the basis of the material he gathered in Prussia, where he served as the Ottoman ambassador.<sup>19</sup> Ibrahim Hamdi's *Atlas* proves the existence of an information and reception gap as regards the geographical discoveries from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reflecting the period between the appearance of geographical works in Europe and their translation into the Ottoman cultural milieu.

Just like his predecessors Kâtib Celebi and Ibrahim Müteferrika, and despite the traditional character of the information used, which was limited to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ibrahim Hamdi ensured, through his *Atlas*, the permeation of new European knowledge into the field of Ottoman physical and historical geography.

## The city and vilayet of Timișoara in Ibrahim Hamdi's Atlas

**F**ROM IBRAHIM Hamdi's *Atlas*, only the second volume has been preserved: here, the historical geography of Rumelia occupies an important place (pages 120 a–282 a).<sup>20</sup> Thus, the chapter entitled “Fi beyan-i iklim-i Rumeli” (“On Discerning the *Klimate* of Rumelia”)<sup>21</sup> comprises the description of the physical and human geography of the countries from South-Eastern Europe. It should be noted that the toponym *Rumeli* (Rumelia) was used in its broad and ultimate sense to refer in fact to the Balkan Peninsula. Actually, when he completed his work (1750), in describing South-Eastern Europe, designated through the toponym *Rumeli*, Ibrahim Hamdi used information dating from the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to C. Orhonlu, the toponym *Rumeli*/ Rumelia referred to a large part of the European continent, north-west of Istanbul.<sup>22</sup>

This *Atlas* provides unique information on various aspects of physical geography, economy or biogeography, as well as on the history of Timișoara, and mystical and cultural life there at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the next.

The geographical description of the city and *vilayet* of Timișoara begins with the presentation of its geographical coordinates. It is a twofold system of geographical coordi-

nates, composed by juxtaposing traditional geographical coordinates and the specific coordinates of European geography. Addressing a traditional Islamic cultural environment, Bartınlı Hamdi Ibrahim stated, first, the geographical location of Timișoara in accordance with Ptolemy's system of dividing the earth's shell into "climates" (*klimata*), that is, *iklim*. He used the system of syllabification, more specifically, of mentioning each letter in the Arabic alphabet that forms the second part of the toponym Timișvar (Timișoara), namely the form *şvar*: "that the land of Timișoara was occupied by submission and that it was peaceful and quiet. (It was a) thriving (land) [represented] in the drawing of the sixth zone (*iklim*) indicated by the letter *shīn* (sh), diacritically characterized through points (*mujeme*), (the letter) *wāw* (w), 'alif (a) and *rā'* (r). [It is located at] 51 [degrees] and a half."<sup>23</sup>

The description of Timișoara's geographical coordinates, according to the system that was characteristic of European geography, respected the tradition cultivated by his predecessors, in the sense of updating and upgrading the knowledge presented in cosmographies. "In the unbelievers' geographies, it is at 43 degrees longitude and [at] 45 and a half degrees latitude."<sup>24</sup> Compared to the current geographical coordinates of Timișoara, that is, 45°47' latitude north and 25°17' longitude east, this estimate shows a significant difference in the calculation of the longitude. The difference of 17°83' in the calculation of Timișoara's longitude results from the considerable difference between the various points around the globe selected by some European geographers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and by contemporary geographers as the zero meridian.<sup>25</sup> Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi took over from Andreas Cellarius's *Atlas* a zero meridian that passed through the island of Corvo in the Archipelago of the Azores as the basis for calculating the longitude. Nowadays, however, the sole starting point for this calculation is Greenwich, near London, on the south bank of the Thames, 9.6 km away from London Bridge.

In the geographical description of the *vilayet* and city of Timișoara, the author harmoniously combined hitherto unknown data relating to physical geography, orography, economic geography, and biogeography. The clarifications regarding the geographical situation of Timișoara and of the *vilayet* bearing its name naturally completed the presentation of the geographical coordinates outlined above. The reader of the *Atlas* may, therefore, find out that the main form of relief characteristic of the region between Belgrade and Timișoara was "a wide plain, with broad margins."<sup>26</sup> In reality, it was only part of the *vilayet*, situated north of the Danube, "face to face with Smederevo and Belgrade," but also on the border of Transylvania. Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi used this opportunity to refer to the administrative-military structure of the *vilayet*, which consisted of six *sanjaks*, with their administrative center in "a famous, powerful and immeasurable city." In Ibrahim Hamdi's conception, Timișoara was an impregnable city mainly due to its geographical location "on an island in the middle of a deep river,"<sup>27</sup> but also due to the higher density and extent of the reed beds around it. Thus the author's relevant observations confirmed and supplemented the Ottoman tradition on the great difficulties faced by the Ottoman army in 1552, during the conquest of the city of Timișoara: "And they say its conquest occurred with very great difficulty, since it was inaccessible because of the swamp and the irises, but also because of the mass of reeds."<sup>28</sup> We should not overlook the fact that at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this exceptional geographical location of the

city of Timișoara helped the Ottomans to thwart the Habsburgs' or the Transylvanian princes' attempts to conquer it. Prior to the time when the imperial commander of the Banat, the cavalry general Count Claudius Florimund Mercy,<sup>29</sup> planned and carried out the hydrotechnic works of the River Bega, the arms and the meanders of the Timiș and the Bega rivers, together with the extensive marshes surrounding the city, had formed an efficient shield for the defense of the city, which was surrounded by three rows of moats. At the same time, there is a waterway for kayaks (*kaykları gyzzer*)<sup>30</sup> in the surroundings of the city that was encircled by a moat filled with water. According to Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi's notes, behind the city of Timișoara there was a lake that may have extended to the Pančevo region. This seems to have been the marshy land represented on the imperial maps of the Banat from the time of Emperor Charles VI.<sup>31</sup>

Worth mentioning are the explanations Ibrahim Hamdi gave to the toponyms that he learned from the local people and that he recorded on the margin of page 251 b. Foremost among these was Beghei, a toponym used by the Romanian population of the *vilayet* to describe the region around Timișoara: "that land is called Beghei."<sup>32</sup> And to remove any doubt about another possible reading, the author listed in a marginal note the letters of the Arabic alphabet with which the toponym Beghei was written: "*bi* (b), the letter which has a single dot and *kief* (k) and *yay* (yi) with the marked sign."<sup>33</sup> In fact, even today, just like the Serbs, the Romanians from the Banat call the river Beghei/Begej, a hydronym that replaced the old name, Timișul Mic, which was in circulation until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup>

The author's explanations also refer to the meaning of the toponym Timișvar in its Osman form, adopted from Hungarian: Temeșvár. The fact that Ibrahim Hamdi felt the need to establish equivalences of terms between the Hungarian word *vár* and its Osman counterpart *kale*, meaning fortress, tacitly involves the derivation of the toponym from the name of the River Timiș: "the point is that it names the city by that water."<sup>35</sup>

The orographic information provided by Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi's *Atlas* concerns two important rivers of the Banat: the Timiș and the Bega or Beghei.

This information erroneously refers only to the river Timiș, as if the Bega River had never existed. This appears surprising at first sight, especially since the author, who used the local tradition, designated the land around Timișoara through the Romanian toponym Beghei. The tacit integration of the Bega River in the Timiș was due, in all likelihood, to the intertwining of the arms and bends of the two rivers with the marshes that stretched from the surroundings of Timișoara, along the Bega, and reached Pančevo. The confusion could also be explained through the *lapsus memoriae* of the author, who wrote his *Atlas* at least two decades after leaving Timișoara. The largest part of the data referring to the River Timiș is correct, corresponding to the geographical reality. For Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi, the Timiș was a "great river, flowing from the eastern and northern regions" by the city of Timișoara, and then flowing into the Danube. On its shores, "many irises and as many reeds" grew. But the most valuable information, included by the author in his *Atlas*, regards the hydrotechnic works conducted by the imperial administration in the Banat, which ensured the direct waterway connection between Timișoara and the Danube: "now merchandise is brought from the Danube to Timișoara on small boats."<sup>36</sup> Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi mentions the construction of the canal which linked Timișoara to the Tisza River, without specify-

ing, however, out of caution or by simple omission, the name of the river whose course was regulated: “One could not cross with the kayaks into the Danube before. The Austrian Giaours linked the ‘Bega’<sup>37</sup> and the Tisza River through a cannal.”<sup>38</sup>

Ibrahim Hamdi’s text, which concerns only the River Timiș, might suggest that this was the river referred to, when in fact the river whose course was regulated and altered was the Bega. The confusion is fully explained if we consider that in 1722, the year when the hydrotechnic works began, the author was an official at Hotin, whence he left for Anatolia to visit his native places. He recorded this action, which he had learned of from others, deeming that it had to be brought to the awareness of the Ottoman readers.

In reality, the regulation of the Timiș and Bega river beds and the building of the Bega Canal were vast works deployed by the imperial administration to ensure an efficient connection between Timișoara or the Banat and the surrounding areas. The project of building the Bega Canal was designed by Count Mercy immediately after the occupation of the Banat: the modified course of the river Bega was represented on the map drawn between 1723 and 1725. The construction of the canal began in 1727; robotniks recruited from the Banat districts were used to this end and they were paid from the provincial government funds. Under the administration of Count Mercy (1727–1734), the upper course of the canal was achieved; this started from near Făget and followed the numerous twists and bends of the River Bega, crossing through Budinș and Izvin<sup>39</sup> and reaching Timișoara.

The four secondary channels derived from the Bega Canal crossed the city of Timișoara to ensure the water necessary for the cleansing installation and for supplying the fortress and the city with drinking water of a higher quality than the swamp water used theretofore. They also served as channels for the transport of construction wood and firewood by raft. Downstream from Timișoara, the canal headed south-east, crossing “The deep swamp” north of Itebej, entering then, at Becicherecul Mare, the old river bed of the Bega.<sup>40</sup>

One should not forget that this canal mentioned by Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi was not the only way of communication in the *vilayet* of Timișoara presented to the Ottoman readers. On the contrary, the author noted with great accuracy the stopovers and the duration of the land route linking the Timișoara to Smederevo and Belgrade. This was a road that travelers usually covered in three days, followed by crossing the Danube at Pančevo. The land road went first through the locality of Ali Bunar; then the bridge from Denta (*Dente köprüsü*) and the Bridge of the Horde (*ordu köprüsü*), which was two hours away from Timișoara, were crossed.<sup>41</sup>

As regards the economic geography of the *vilayet* of Timișoara, Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi’s *Atlas* includes a host of diverse information, never before encountered in other Ottoman sources. They refer to the natural riches of the soil and subsoil which had impressed the author deeply ever since his childhood. Referring to the fertility of the soil, we must point out that the *Atlas* was the only hitherto known Ottoman source that put two different and distant provinces of the Ottoman Empire on the same par: the *vilayet* of Timișoara and the land that, according to Herodotus, had been a gift of the Nile: “The *vilayet* of Timișoara may have been the only province of the Ottoman Empire that was as fertile as Egypt.”<sup>42</sup>

Granting the Ottoman people “joy in all the four cardinal points,”<sup>43</sup> the Plain Banat was indeed “a very rich land” because of its natural fertility and the variety of trees

laden with fruit. This finding related primarily to the surroundings of Timișoara city which, according to the testimony of Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi, “were adorned with gardens and vegetable gardens.”<sup>44</sup> It was the very fertility of the soil that explained, in the author’s view, both the easeful life and the abundance of “food, blankets and means of defense”<sup>45</sup> possessed by the Ottoman population of Timișoara and, especially, their great indulgence in worldly pleasures: “the greater the comfort of a land (*vilayet*), the greater the debauchery of its inhabitants (*ahalisinin feski*), which increased from day to day. Everyone indulged in bodily pleasures.”<sup>46</sup> The notes of Ibrahim Hamdi also reveal the fact that the aforementioned wealth and abundance were supported by a flourishing trade in Timișoara, ensured by the daily goods brought over by the Ottoman subjects. It should also be noted that commercial inns were turned into warehouses that were packed with merchandise.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, the author intentionally gave up mentioning details about the welfare of the shopping streets, where the stalls were located. He insisted more on that time of day when the commodity prices significantly decreased: “When it came to lunch time (*vakit-i zuhura*) [and] no living soul went down the shopping streets, [then] the merchandise went cheaper.”<sup>48</sup>

Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi showed the same interest in the price of metals mined from the Carașova region. For example, the copper oke cost only 10 dimes, much less than the lead oke, for which 4 silver coins (*akçe*) were normally paid.<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, the author of the *Atlas* proved to be inconsistent in locating the mineral resources of the Timișoara *vilayet*. It cannot be ascertained whether that was due to an oversight or to truncated information. We only know that during the Ottoman rule in the region of Carașova, copper and lead mines were exploited, and that there existed gold, silver and saltpeter (*rık*) mines in the *vilayet* of Timișoara: “In the other *nahiye* (territorial subdivisions) there were gold, silver and saltpeter mines.”<sup>50</sup> The succinct presentation of the main sources of income in the *vilayet* of Timișoara ends with the number of Muslim subjects required to pay the *kharaj* (*kharajjūzar*): “And the state knew [that it had] 40,000 *kharadj*-paying subjects.”<sup>51</sup> Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi’s statement contains no fewer than two confusions. The first confusion is older, dating back to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Such confusion exists in the text of the *kanunname* (books of law) promulgated for the *sanjak* of Timișoara,<sup>52</sup> where the capitation (*jiziya*) was also called *kharaj*. This confusion concerned the *jiziya*, a religious tax imposed by the *şeri’at* which was acquitted on St. Demetrius’s day (26 October). The second confusion relates to a total of 40,000 households instead of 40,000 *kharaj*-paying people, because the tax was imposed on the household as a separate fiscal unit, defined by adherence to the principle of separately maintaining and using goods.

Respecting the tradition of cosmographies, Ibrahim Hamdi Bartınlı recorded interesting information about the biogeography of the Timișoara region, that is, about its flora and fauna, about the monuments, remarkable personalities and the aspect of Timișoara.

The marginal notes on page 251 b regarding the endemic flora around the city of Timișoara evince the author’s concern to highlight the characteristics of its ecological system. They refer not only to the dense reed beds and the mass of irises that often hampered the conquest of Timișoara, but also to other plants that adorned the banks of the Timiș River: “pond lily flowers, colored in red and green.”<sup>53</sup> What is particularly interesting is

the fact that the author insisted on the appreciation of the iris rhizomes that were intertwined with the long reed stalks. After being harvested and dried on a string, they became a high-priced gift<sup>54</sup> in Istanbul due to their therapeutic virtues. The haven of plants and birds around Timișoara remained deeply entrenched in the memory of Bartınlı Ibrahim Hamdi: “water stretches adorned with red and green flowers, as well as countless varied species of birds in the hunting places. Along with the rich yield of the beautiful gardens, the pheasants, the quails and the other species of birds form that natural wealth of the Timișoara *vilayet* that has protected the people from the burdens and sorrows of poverty.”<sup>55</sup>

It was in this natural setting that there was placed the city “full of great churches and high bell towers (*nakus-i kâhlar*),” a city that Vizier Ahmed Pasha had conquered in 1552, after a siege that lasted, according to the Ottoman tradition, 25 days.<sup>56</sup>

Bartınlı Hamdi Ibrahim describes Timișoara as a city made up of two fortresses: the inner fortress (*iş ka'la*), built of stone, and another, adjacent fortress, made of wood. Between them there were the powder works, the wintering sites (*kışlaklar*) and a horse-drawn mill. The five gates of the second fortress linked Timișoara to the towns of Belgrade, Arad, Lipova and Caransebeș. These included the gate built right behind the city, face to face with the inner city (the citadel), the Bloody Tower Gate (*Kanlı kule kapısı*), the Rooster Gate (*Horoz kapısı*), adorned with a weathercock that moved in the wind, the Azaps' Gate, endowed with a large clock, whose strikes were heard in all the parts of the city, and the Water Gate (*Su kapısı*).<sup>57</sup> When describing the wooden fortress gates, the author insisted on the direction and destination of the roads that started from there. Entering the city through the Azaps' Gate, travelers found themselves at a crossroads: one road led to the Gate of the Martolos, while the second road reached the Forforos Gate. Even more roads divided at the Water Gate: these headed to the Customs Gate (*Vam kapısı*), to the Topçı Baba monastery of dervishes (*tekke*), and from there to the Bridge of the Horde (*Ordu köprüsü*), then to Caransebeș, Lugoj or Belgrade.<sup>58</sup>

It might seem surprising that in the description of Timișoara, Ibrahim Hamdi focused only on the worship sites for practicing Islam: three bathrooms, ten mosques raised in the name of the sultans and a few *masjids*, or prayer houses lacking minarets. Regarding the location of the bathhouses, the *Atlas* states that near the battlements from the inner fortress, there was a small bathhouse, while a large clean bathhouse was situated near the Pasha's house (*paşa sarayı kurbunda*), close to the Rooster Gate, and a third bathhouse, called the Island Bathhouse, was in the city suburbs.<sup>59</sup>

Just like other chapters of the *Atlas*, the fragment describing the *vilayet* of Timișoara respects the tradition of Ottoman cosmographies. Presenting a significant administrative-military unit in Central and Southeastern Europe, lost by the Ottoman Empire through the Peace Treaty of Passarowitz (1718), the author recorded various processes, historical events and great deeds worthy of being transmitted to posterity. The passages on the conquest and loss of the Banat by the Ottomans confirm, once again, the characteristics of a cosmography that are typical of Ibrahim Hamdi's *Atlas*. These passages nonetheless prove the existence of a gap of dimensions and information. While the author used the local Ottoman tradition to recount the manner in which the *vilayet* of Timișoara was set up, he resorted to his own memories and battle experience to reconstruct the siege and surrender of Timișoara on 12 October 1716.

The data on the process of establishing the *vilayet* of Timișoara are mostly correct. The author rightly distinguished a phase that preceded the actual occupation of the Banat, whose beginning he placed in 1541, at the time when the autonomous principality of Transylvania was set up and when the rule of *Comes* Petru Petrovici over the city of Timișoara and its pertinences began. According to the local Ottoman tradition, Sultan Süleyman Kanuni granted Sigismund Zápolya dominion over the Banat and, later, on account of political and military considerations, he imposed his conquest thereof. The first Ottoman expedition, from the autumn of 1551, entrusted to the Beglerbeg of Rumelia, Mehmed Pasha, resulted in the fortification of the city of Timișoara: "They built earthen walls in all the parts of the fortress."<sup>60</sup>

The conquest of the city took place on 26 July 1552, after long battles that concluded with the disarming of the garrison troops and the murder of their commander.

Ibrahim Hamdi recorded, according to the local tradition, "the slaying of the Spanish commander,"<sup>61</sup> when, in fact, the one executed was Commander Stephen Losonczy.

However, the passages on the conquest and partial loss of the Ottoman Banat are not the only passages in the *Atlas* that mention events that are representative of the history of the Timișoara *vilayet*.

In fact, the presentation of the intellectual and spiritual life guided by some famous *şeyhi*, leaders of the *Khalvetiyye* Order, such as *şeyh* Selim Dede, includes the account of remarkable deeds and events. Among these are not only representative elements for the genre known as *menakibname* (hagiographic literature comprising anecdotes about saints and pious men)<sup>62</sup> but an unusual event, the visit of Sultan Mustafa II, the only visit made by a sultan to Timișoara known so far.

In presenting the qualities, powers and extraordinary deeds of *şeyh* Selim Dede, Ibrahim Hamdi insisted on his ability to influence the political and military decisions of the Ottoman commanders. Before the Battle of Zenta, Selim Dede, the son of a *sipahi*, a good connoisseur of the places crossed by the Ottoman army, advised Sultan Mustafa II in writing not to proceed towards that village. His advice was not only ignored, but the dervish (*ızık*) who brought the letter to Selim Dede was subjected to an undeserved opprobrium.<sup>63</sup> We should not linger any longer on the passage referring to the special deeds and the anecdotes recounted by Ibrahim Hamdi about the predictions and clairvoyance of *şeyh* Selim Dede. Together with all other information submitted by Ibrahim Hamdi, the aforementioned elements certify the indisputable authenticity and value of the fragment in the *Atlas* dedicated to Timișoara and its surroundings. This finding verifies and fully confirms the general conclusions of C. Orhonlu<sup>64</sup> and M. Ak<sup>65</sup> on Ibrahim Hamdi's genuine contribution to the development of historical geography and on the truly original part of his *Atlas*.

It is beyond any doubt that the fragment devoted to the *vilayet* and the city of Timișoara is a characteristic example for the manner of presentation of the cities and the provinces in which the author of the *Atlas* lived or through which he passed. Together with this fragment, the passages on some cities and countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe - Hotin, Oceaov (Özü), Crimea, Moldova, Wallachia and Bulgaria - form the original part, of great importance, in the work of Ibrahim Hamdi. By using a large number of Ottoman and European sources, these passages increase the value of Ibrahim Hamdi's

*Atlas*, entitling its classification as a pioneering work of historical geography, which contributed to the development of the Ottoman school of geography.<sup>66</sup>

Although the author of the *Atlas* valued the science of European geography, he was not yet aware of its own additions and discernments accomplished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the foundations of physical geography were laid. We should mention the research carried out at sea and on land, and the increased knowledge of the lesser known places, the development of cartography as a science, the important additions as regards the measuring of the globe, as well as the ideas of the time referring to meteorology and geology.<sup>67</sup>

It is natural to establish the place that Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi occupied in the Ottoman culture of Timișoara, the city of his childhood and youth. We can accurately do this only to the extent to which we relate his contribution to the development of descriptive and historical geography in the Ottoman Empire and not the overall level of the development of geography in Western Europe. No doubt that, in the current sense, the *Atlas* is a compilation, which traditionally uses an impressive number of sources. It also offers important new information about the city and *vilayet* of Timișoara, as well as about the hydrotechnic works conducted by the imperial Habsburg administration after the conquest of the Banat in 1716. From this point of view, Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi's *Atlas* is a very important and representative work for the Ottoman geography, education and mystical culture from the *vilayet* of Timișoara. □

*Translated into English by CARMEN-VERONICA BORBELY*

## Notes

1. C. Orhonlu, "XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlılarda Djografiya ve Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi'nin Atlası" [Ottoman Geography in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi's *Atlas*], *Tarih Dergisi* 14, 19 (1964): 115–138; Orhonlu, "Geographical Knowledge Amongst the Ottomans and the Balkans in the Eighteenth Century According to Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi's *Atlas*," in *Historical Geography of the Balkans*, ed. F. W. Carter (London, New-York, 1977), 276–291.
2. Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi Atlası, Süleymaniye Library from Istanbul, a manuscript preserved in the Es'ad Efendi Fund, no. 2044, page 254 b.
3. *Ibid.*, page 255 a; M. Ak, "Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi ve Atlası" [Bartınlı İbrahim Hamdi and His *Atlas*], *Belleten* 44, 239 (2000): 71.
4. Bartınlı Atlası, 253b.
5. *Ibid.*, 255a; Ak, "Bartınlı," 71.
6. Piri Ahmed Efendi settled in Timișoara after the occupation of Hungary by the imperials. Foreseeing the conquest of the Banat by Eugene of Savoy, he sold his assets three years before the occupation of Timișoara, and left with his family for Medina, where he passed away. Bartınlı Atlası, 248b.
7. *Ibid.*, 253b–254a.
8. *Ibid.*, 262b, *apud* Orhonlu, "XVIII. Yüzyılda," 129, note 19.
9. Bartınlı Atlası, 254.
10. *Ibid.*, 275a, *apud* Orhonlu, "XVIII. Yüzyılda," 121.
11. *Ibid.*, 122, 123; Orhonlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 279.
12. Orhonlu, "XVIII. Yüzyılda," 126.
13. *Ibid.*, see the discussion of C. Orhonlu.

14. Bursalı Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri* [*The Ottoman Authors*], vol. III (*Istanbul, 1924–1925*) [1343 H.], 317; M. Macuc, “Uncle date despre Țările române și Peninsula Balcanică într-un manuscris al lui Ibrahim Hamdi,” *Revista Arhivelor* 59, 1, (1997): 86 contests the geographical character of the work, considering it as a *mixtum compositum*. However, this very character is specific to cosmographies.
15. Orhonlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 279.
16. Orhonlu, “XVIII. Yüzyılda,” 128.
17. These were the researches done at sea and on land, the development of cartography and of the system of measuring the globe, the conceptions of the time related to meteorology and geology.
18. Orhonlu, “XVIII. Yüzyılda,” 129.
19. Orhonlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 278, 279.
20. Orhonlu, “XVIII. Yüzyılda,” 137–138, see the Table of Contents in the *Atlas*.
21. *Ibid.*, 137. In the Islamic and the Ottoman world, the known geographical material was ordered according to the system of the 7 true *klimate* devised by Ptolemy (*Batlamyos*). This system was used in dividing the earth shell into ‘climates’ (*iklim*), a purely geographical classification, reaching the number of 28 *klimate* (*akalim-i urfiye*) mentioned by Abul Feda in his *Geography*, B. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, (New York, London, 1982), 60.
22. Orhonlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 281.
23. Bartınlı Atlası, 251b.
24. *Ibid.*
25. For the setting of various points as a reference meridian, see Ş. Mureşan, *Banatul in cartografia secolului al XVIII-lea* (Timișoara, 2012), 36–37.
26. Bartınlı Atlası.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. J. Kallbrunner, *Das kaiserliche Banat*, vol. I (München, 1958), 43.
30. Bartınlı Atlası, 251b.
31. See map no. 3 in the work written by K. Kallbrunner, and conceived by H. Schwalm, which was reproduced after *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums*.
32. Bartınlı Atlası.
33. *Ibid.*: *bi muvehhada ve kief ve yay sükün ile*.
34. Mureşan, *Banatul*, 31.
35. Bartınlı Atlası, 251b.
36. *Ibid.*, 252a.
37. This is our specification and amendment.
38. Bartınlı Atlası, 252a.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. Bartınlı Atlası, 251b.
42. *Ibid.*, 256a.
43. *Ibid.*, 255b.
44. *Ibid.*, 252a.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, 255b.
47. *Ibid.*: “commercial inns were thriving, being crammed with different goods. The items were brought by the subjects on a daily basis” (*re’aya*).
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, 256a.
50. *Ibid.*



51. Ibid.
52. Ö. L. Barkan, *XV ve XVI-inci Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda zirai ekonominin hukuki ve mali esasları*, vol. I. *Kanunlar [Agrarian Law and Its Financial Bases in the Ottoman Empire during the Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries]*, vol. 1, Codes of Laws], (Istanbul, 1943), 318; V. Veliman, "Documente turco-osmane privind vilayetul (eyaletul) Timișoara," *Revista Arhivelor* 47, 4 (1985): 420; Cr. Feneșan, "Instaurarea dominației otomane în ținutul Lipovei în lumina codului de legi (kanunname) din 1554," *Studii și comunicări de istorie* (1979): 338; A. Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve hukuki tablilleri [Ottoman Books of Law and Their Analysis]*, 7/1, part 2, (Istanbul, 1993), 132, 121, 114, 101.
53. Bartınli Atlası, page 251 b, see the first note on the margin.
54. Ibid.: "Strung on a twine, the rhizomes were left to dry. Arriving in Istanbul as gifts, the rhizomes were held in high esteem."
55. Ibid., 256a.
56. Ibid., 251b.
57. Ibid., 252a.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 255b.
60. Ibid., 251b.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 252b–254b.
63. Ibid., 254a.
64. Orhonlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 284, 287.
65. Ak, "Bartınli", 83–84.
66. Orhonlu, "XVIII. Yüzyılda," 131; Orhonlu, *Geographical Knowledge*, 284.
67. A. Wolf, *A History of Science, Technology and Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1951), 410–425.

### Abstract

#### Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi, a Geographer of the Timișoara Vilayet

During his childhood and youth, the Ottoman geographer Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi lived for over 20 years in Timișoara, where he was educated and initiated into Ottoman mysticism, in the *Khalvetiyye* Order (*tariqa*). In his cosmography, completed in 1750 and conventionally entitled *Atlas*, Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi included unique information about various aspects of the physical geography, the economy, and the mystical and cultural life in Timișoara from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the next. His cosmography also comprised various data, unencountered in other Ottoman sources, on the natural riches of the soil and subsoil, which had impressed the author ever since his childhood. Under these circumstances, determining the role that Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi played in the Ottoman culture from Timișoara depends on the assessment of his contribution to the development of descriptive and historical geography in the Ottoman Empire and should not be related to the level of general development in Western Europe. In the current acceptation, the *Atlas* provides new information about the city and *vilayet* of Timișoara, as well as about the hydro-technical work carried out by the imperial Habsburg administration after the conquest of the Banat (1716).

### Keywords

Bartınli Ibrahim Hamdi, cosmography, historical geography, the city and the *vilayet* of Timișoara.