

OTTOMAN HANDWRITTEN DOCUMENTS IN ADJARA

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Abstract. This study revolves around Ottoman-language handwritten documents, offering key insights derived from extensive research in this field. The majority of these manuscripts find preservation within the familial archives of the Adjara population, displaying a remarkable diversity in content that spans various facets of family life. These documents cover a wide spectrum, encompassing records related to marriage, divorce, real estate distribution, transactions like purchases, sales, and mortgages, as well as a range of certificates, receipts, trade permits, and other relevant documents. Additionally, the collection includes correspondence among family members and letters from Muhajirs, providing a comprehensive view of familial relationships and social interactions.

To comprehensively explore the diverse subjects covered in these handwritten documents, the research adopts interdisciplinary approaches, incorporating historical, ethnological, cartographic, and linguistic methodologies. Specific examples highlighting the intricacies of translating Ottoman-language handwritten texts are also presented, adding a linguistic dimension to the study.

Keywords: Adjara, Ottoman manuscript, document, history, toponymy, spragistics, family, property.

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აბსტრაქტი. ნაშრომი ოსმალურენოვან ხელნაწერ დოკუმენტებს ეხება. მასში ამ სახის საბუთების კვლევის ძირითადი შედეგებია წარმოდგენილი. ხელნაწერი საბუთების უმრავლესობა აჭარის მოსახლეობის საოჯახო არქივებშია დაცული. ისინი შინაარსობრივად ძალზე მრავალფეროვანია და საოჯახო ყოფის სხვადასხვა სფეროს ეხება. ესაა ქორწინებისა და განქორწინების, უძრავი ქონების განაწილების, ყიდვა-გაყიდვისა და დაგირავების ამსახველი დოკუმენტები. გვხვდება სხვადასხვა სახის მოწმობები, ქვითრები, სავაჭრო თუ სხვა სახის ნებართვები, ნათესავეებს შორის მიმოწერები და მუჰაჯირების წერილები. მსგავსი ხელნაწერი საბუთები პირველწყაროს სახით აჭარაში არსებული გვარების გენეალოგიური სქემებისათვის ძალზე მნიშვნელოვან ინფორმაციას შეიცავს. დოკუმენტები საინტერესოა ტოპონიმიკური კვლევის თვალსაზრისითაც.

ხელნაწერი დოკუმენტების მრავალფეროვანი თემატიკის შესაბამისად, კვლევა ინტერდისციპლინური მიდგომების დაცვით განხორციელდა და დოკუმენტების კვლევის ისტორიული, ეთნოლოგიური, კარტოგრაფიული და სფრაგისტიკული მიდგომები მოიცვა. მოყვანილია ოსმალურენოვანი ხელნაწერი ტექსტების თარგმანთან დაკავშირებული კონკრეტული მაგალითებიც.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: აჭარა, ოსმალური ხელნაწერი, საბუთი, ისტორია, ტოპონიმიკა, სფრაგისტიკა, ოჯახი, საკუთრება.

Introduction:

Handwritten family documents in the Ottoman language are prevalent in southwestern Georgia, particularly in Adjara. A significant portion of these documents is conserved in diverse repositories, including the Khariton Akhvlediani Museum and private collections. The majority of these family records are penned in the Ottoman language. During the Ottoman Empire era, documents of varied nature - financial, political, or otherwise - were meticulously crafted in different handwriting styles or scripts, including calligraphy. One such style was the "Rika's hand," employed for drafting private documents. The documents under our scrutiny are composed in the "Rika hand," a prevalent script in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th-20th centuries. Additionally, there are instances of Russian-language and mixed versions, combining Ottoman and Russian elements. Some handwritten documents also feature Georgian inscriptions.

The authors have dedicated several years to the study of this particular manuscript genre. They have produced papers geared towards interdisciplinary research focused on specific documents. Subsequently, the significance of this issue garnered widespread interest, leading to an extensive search and collection of numerous Ottoman-language documents. Qualified translations were meticulously executed, followed by the processing and synthesis of the acquired materials across various thematic dimensions. In 2022, a comprehensive analysis of issues pertaining to this subject was undertaken as part of the intra-university targeted grant at Shota Rustaveli State University of Batumi. The findings of this study are presented in this article for the first time, offering a publication of the main results derived from the research.

Publishing, researching and putting into scientific circulation Ottoman-language handwritten documents is an important innovation for researchers interested in this issue. Manuscripts found in Adjara are diverse in content. Some of them are proof of land ownership, others reflect the distribution of land and the ownership of this or that family or relative group, and some refer to the division of

household sharers and the segmentation of family property. There are various types of certificates, receipts. According to the handwritten documents of this type, the following are established: toponyms, anthroponyms, surnames, family names and hereditary names denoting genealogical groups, issues of historical geography, historical facts of various nature. Such documents also provide good material for the study of proceedings and the structure of official documents of the relevant period, for the study of Ottoman or Russian spragistics.

Methods:

The Ottoman-language manuscripts encompass materials from various historical science fields, adding an intriguing layer for linguistic and translation studies. Consequently, the research methodology employed for such documents is diverse, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the subject matter. The varied nature of the materials calls for different research methods. The primary methodological foundation for analyzing the information presented in the manuscript relies on the comparative-historical method. This method involves verifying data confirmed in the manuscript - such as names of individuals, surnames, genealogical groups, names of villages and districts, or other toponyms - through field-ethnographic expeditions. Through this approach, the research team gains the opportunity to ascertain how the depicted situation in the document evolved over time and identify the changes leading to its current state. From a technical standpoint, several step procedures were implemented as part of the methodical approaches. Accompanying the explanatory text are various elements: a photo-text of the original document in its unaltered form, an Ottoman-Arabic language photo-digital version of the text, a Latin transcription of the text, and a Georgian translation of the same text. These components collectively facilitate the analysis of the text, clarification of facts, and comparison of these facts with the reality that has been preserved to the present day.

Results:

The main results of the research can be summarized in several points:

1. Ottoman-language handwritten documents, in particular, photocopies and photocopies made from the original, were included in the scientific circulation; qualified translation of the manuscript in Georgian; Ottoman and Turkish digitization of handwritten texts was carried out. This will allow the interested researcher to carry out the study of manuscripts based on his own goals, if necessary.
2. Classification of handwritten documents was carried out. The documents were divided into several groups: manuscripts related to private property (property division, purchase, sale, pledge); handwritten certificates, receipts related to financial relations (debt taking, debt payment, land mortgage); Handwritten certificates related to social relations: marriage, divorce, mutual assistance.
3. An interdisciplinary historical-ethnological study of handwritten family documents in the Ottoman language was performed.

Discussion:

The primary chronological scope of Ottoman-language family documents extends from the latter half of the 19th century to the 1930s. Against this backdrop, an inquiry arises regarding the conditions that facilitated the enduring presence of the Ottoman language in family manuscripts.

Following the Russo-Ottoman wars, post-1878, the Imperial Russia annexed the South Caucasus, an ethnically and linguistically diverse region that included Georgia. In this newly acquired territory, Russian was mandated as the official language for legal matters and other forms of communication. The Russian Empire initiated local reforms in the Caucasus governorates from the 1940s, enforcing the use of the Russian language. However, the reformation processes, including the imposition of the Russian language, reached Adjara relatively later. Despite Russian becoming the official language in the region after 1878, it appears that Ottoman continued to be employed as a written language, especially among the lower classes of the local population. It is crucial to note that in this context, Ottoman was used exclusively in written form and not as a spoken language. Georgians residing in Turkey have retained the Georgian spoken language to the present day, indicating that, in the 1870s-1880s and beyond, the Georgian Muslim population in the region still conversed in Georgian. The persistent use of the Ottoman language in family documents underscores the vitality of this language, particularly in its written form. One plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that the local population might not have been familiar with any other written language, rendering Ottoman a convenient choice for their documentation needs.

In Adjara, a region newly liberated from Ottoman rule, the restoration of Georgian writing became a focal point for the progressive society of the time. The local community played a pivotal role in promoting literacy among Georgians in this indigenous part of Georgia. It is noteworthy, however, that despite these efforts, only six Georgian Muslims were enrolled in the initial Georgian school established in Adjara in 1881, a figure observed until 1906. Within family or private documents, the preservation of the Ottoman script until the 1930s, alongside the complexities of the language policy, can be attributed to additional factors. Specifically, the older generation, predominantly responsible for managing Adjara's families during this period, primarily engaged in external activities such as buying and selling, particularly in land transactions. As a result, the Ottoman script may have been more practical as a written language for them, with Russian being less favored. This is substantiated by the prevalence of Ottoman language in a significant portion of family documents, while only a small fraction is written in Russian.

Ottoman-language family manuscripts offer a rich and diverse thematic landscape, making them intriguing for various branches of historical science. Of particular significance are the ethnographic materials embedded within these documents. The examination and synthesis of these materials open avenues for exploration into numerous captivating facets of the traditional life of the population in Adjara, providing a valuable written primary source (Mgeladze, Shashikadze, Tunadze, 2014: 133-139). These sources serve as a means to reconstruct historical and ethnographic episodes spanning the 19th to the 20th centuries, offering glimpses into the social, legal, and religious dimensions of that era. Specific issues directly tied to the institution of marriage, events reflecting family life, land measurement units, tax systems, monetary values, and geographical names including districts, villages, and places (toponyms) are illuminated through these manuscripts. Additionally, proper names such as anthroponyms and patronymic names, especially family names and surnames, further enrich the exploration of this historical and cultural tapestry.

In Adjara, Ottoman-language family documents took various forms, serving different purposes, with a notable emphasis on documents reflecting diverse aspects of marriage and marital relations. Manuscript documents detailing marriage and divorce processes reveal the varied methods employed in the selection of marital partners. Primarily orchestrated by senior family members, the selection aimed to ensure improved living conditions for the newlywed couple. A noteworthy example involves plans to marry a daughter from Kobuleti to Istanbul, illustrating how Ottoman representatives viewed Kobuleti as part of the land and water under Russian jurisdiction. Marriage and divorce documents outline the property status of women and establish dowry terms. These documents often commence with expressions of gratitude to God and the Messenger, affirming the wishes of both parties and their respective relatives. Some documents specify a designated amount and dowry as conditions for their formulation. Notably, these documents stress the absence of opposition to the marriage. While marriage documents center around family consent, divorce documents underscore mutual agreement between the husband and wife, validated by witnesses. Intriguingly, in certain instances, women are documented as contributing to the divorce fee, foregoing dowry or maintenance money. Ottoman-language family documents reveal diverse reasons for compiling divorce records, even though the specific reasons may not be explicitly stated.

Engagement and marriage held considerable significance in Adjara as these events not only marked the union of individuals but also determined the full functionality of the clan and, consequently, the broader society. Dating back to the late Middle Ages, the matrimonial relations in Adjara saw the influence of various foreign elements, historically shaped and conventionally established under the impact of Ottoman rule and Sharia law. This foreign influence on traditional practices is distinctly evident in Ottoman-language handwritten documents. The document authors, in compiling these manuscripts, predominantly adhered to Sharia and Ottoman legislation. However, one can also discern elements of customary and folk law interwoven within these documents. In instances where the resolution of a matter proved challenging within the confines of Sharia, the compilers naturally turned to folk law. The expertise of numerous local Muslim judges in folk law played a crucial role in navigating and resolving such situations.

Ottoman language documents mention the terms "Mehri" ("Mihri"/"Mihiri") and "Mehri müeccel", which meant the amount to be given to the woman's side at the time of separation. More specifically, Mehri was a sum of money paid by a man to a woman's family as part of a marriage. Mehri müeccel seems to have the same content, which means money, property, to be given to the girl's side at the betrothal. The amount of money was determined during the drawing up of a separate document -

"Nikâh" for the usual engagement. Nikâh generally meant marriage, legal marriage. "Aghdi" was mentioned repeatedly in Ottoman-language documents.

The "Nikâh" held a paramount position in the Islamic legal system, particularly within the context of Muslim marriage. This document represented the marital obligation between two individuals of different genders, meticulously drawn up in accordance with Sharia rules to validate conjugal cohabitation (Vagabov, 1980: 47, 50). The preparation of the Nikâh involved the participation of one or two men and women, and the marriage ceremony and registration occurred in the presence of the Qadi. The primary condition for Nikâh was to ascertain the suitability of the man and woman, with a focus on the husband's financial capacity to fulfill the marriage ransom and the family's support reflected through property conditions. During the Ottoman rule, starting from the end of the Middle Ages, the engagement document, known as "Nikâh" in Adjara, was conducted in the presence of a Muslim clergyman. However, adherence to Sharia norms in the execution of this document did not consistently follow established rules and, in many instances, aligned with customary law. In Upper Adjara, specifically in the Ghorjomi valley, two types of "Aghdi" were prevalent: "raw" and "dry." The first one was arranged like a wedding in the bride's paternal family, and the second one took place in a mosque. These and other expenses related to the ceremony were paid by the bride's side (Mgeladze, 1996: 229).

In the Adjara population, both "Nikâh" and "Aghdi" served as official documents, universally acknowledged to confirm engagement and marriage. These documents delineated the rights and responsibilities of the paternal families of the bride and groom, and crucially, addressed the possibility of divorce. While a range of religious rituals and ceremonies were customary in Adjara weddings, the most prominent from a religious-legal standpoint was the "Aghdi", conducted in the Muslim tradition. According to historical sources, "Aghdi" was intended to be conducted separately. Nevertheless, in the customs of Upper Adjara villages, "Aghdi" took place in the bride's house, attended by male relatives from both sides (Sakhokia, 1950: 189). The groom and bride were absent during the "Aghdi" ceremony, represented instead by proxies and witnesses. A specified amount was stipulated in the "Aghdi," and if the husband unjustly left his wife, he was obligated to pay the specified amount and return the dowry.

The term "Mehri" ("Mihri") was associated with the divorce of husband and wife. From the time of Ottoman rule, in Adjara villages, when "Aghdi" was executed, the "Mihri duty" was invoked. In case of divorce, the agreement concerning the wife's financial compensation was verbal. According to traditional norms, different valleys and communities in Adjara had varying numbers of "Mihri duty." The Ottoman language documents we've examined mention specific amounts and dowry. For instance: Nurie, the daughter of Ahmed Bajelidze, a resident of the village of Khutsubani, Kobuleti region, married Yusuf, the son of Mehmed Romanogli, on the condition of paying ten thousand one kurush of Mihri, while another notes a marriage certificate "on the condition of paying one hundred and fifty red gold Mihri." Mihri was consistently considered when making the "Aghdi" since it formed the basis of the marriage contract when divorce occurred. The "Mihri duty" mentioned in "Aghdi" had to be paid to the party responsible for breaking the marriage contract during divorce. According to tradition, only the husband had the right to initiate divorce, a fact evident in the Ottoman-language family documents presented. "Mihri" became the property of the wife and, with certain exceptions, was not subject to return. It could take the form of either a monetary unit or a specified item of value. However, in the manuscripts studied, Mihri is consistently depicted in monetary form.

A portion of the examined handwritten documents pertains to the distribution of inheritance within the realm of private property, shedding light on the family's property situation. These documents include inheritance disputes, often arising among brothers or between a brother and a married sister. The resolution of such disputes involved the active participation of relatives and close neighbors possessing relevant information. Clearly, these instances illustrate the community's efforts to uphold traditional norms rooted in customary law. The guiding principle in the distribution of inheritance was equality, with the individual with whom the parents resided often receiving a slightly larger share among brothers. This inheritance distribution principle, substantiated by field-ethnographic materials, appears to persist into contemporary times. The documents governing specific disputes are particularly intriguing, revealing instances where disputants could not reach a resolution at the local level, prompting them to seek intervention from official channels. Unfortunately, the available information does not confirm which administrative or legal instance the dispute was elevated to in these cases.

The documents delineating the property status of families offer intriguing insights. While quantitatively limited, these documents provide a snapshot of the economic landscape of affluent Adjarian families during the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. The possessions

of these families encompassed various elements, including: property related to agricultural crops and cattle breeding, agricultural, hunting and combat tools, household inventory, where copper utensils were preferred, monetary savings, silver items and received orders are also named.

Among the Ottoman-language manuscripts, the "purchase papers" pertaining to the acquisition and transfer of immovable property hold significant importance. These documents provide detailed descriptions of the property, including its characteristics, quantity, and value. In the context of immovable property, such as land, the documents also specify the boundaries of the plot. Each purchase document involves the participation and consent of witnesses, often including relatives, neighbors, and the village head (Mukhtar). The involvement of witnesses helps validate the transaction and ensures a record of the agreement. During the process of buying and selling land, disputes or contentious issues occasionally arose. In such instances, parties involved might propose a replacement plot as a resolution, formalized through a written agreement. There are cases where individuals express a desire to purchase land, and agreements are reached through mutual consent. Regardless of the nature of the transaction, each case necessitates the presence of witnesses and the preparation of specific documents to legitimize and record the details of the property transaction.

Among the Ottoman-language documents, there are records illustrating land pledges and leases. For instance, in 1902, a document outlines the mortgage of 2.7 hectares of land with an average yield in the village of Didachara for 200 manats over a nine-year period. Another case involves the pledging of a forest for three years in exchange for 80 Manats, with permission granted to cut and remove wood.

The tradition of assisting economically needy families was prevalent in Adjara, as reaffirmed by an Ottoman-language handwritten document. In a specific instance documented in 1925, relatives and neighbors extended a loan to a family for the burial expenses of a deceased member, which the family could not cover. Following the traditional principle of mutual assistance in Adjara, known as "Support," the funeral expenses of the deceased were shouldered by the relatives and neighbors.

Handwritten documents are also interesting from the point of view of metrology, or the study of traditional measuring units. In a number of documents, the following units of size and weight are named: "Donum", "Can", "Okha". These were units of land measurement and indicated the amount of harvest that could be obtained from a specific section of land.

Toponymic vocabulary is abundantly found in Ottoman-language manuscripts discovered in Adjara. Almost all documents contain names of villages, communities, individual districts or other types of places. Such an abundance of toponymic material allows us to reconstruct some historical episodes of the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In addition to the names denoting the settlement - district, village and community, toponymic material forms a separate group in Ottoman-language family documents, which represent the names of places – plowing area, mowing area, garden, spring. Most of them have been forgotten or disappeared today. In this regard, family Ottoman-language documents have a great source knowledge value. There are also toponyms in the documents, the reading of which necessarily requires field observation and accurate recording of the name by local residents. In this case, we will limit ourselves to the analysis of only a few toponyms.

Among the names of settlements, the toponym "Khula" attracts attention, which in modern times corresponds to the township "Khulo". Today, Khulo is a large settlement in Zemo Adjara and is the administrative center of Khulo Municipality. "Khula" in some parts of Georgia meant a building for storing grains and various agricultural products, a small barn. Khula was a traditional Georgian agricultural building in which dried fruits, nuts, chestnuts, walnuts, corn and various types of grains or seeds were kept. Khula stood in the yard as an independent, one-storage, one-story building. It was covered with a two- or four-layered roof made of wood, and had a wooden door. Along with the Khula, a barn was placed under the same roof. According to Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, Khula is called a fruit with a hard shell. It is likely that the name Khula originated from this. In Western Georgia, Khula was often used as a synonym for a barn (Dictionary of Georgian Material Culture, 2011: 64-65, 386). According to Tedo Sakhokia, the Khula (barn) was located in the Upper Adjara dwelling, which was composed of different sections (Sakhokia, 1950: 172). Giorgi Chitaia confirmed the Khula-house in the ethnographic reality of Adjara as one of the types of mountain residential structures (Chitaia, 1997: 204). In Adjara, the old form of the name "Khulo" - "Khula" also meant a trading house, which corresponds well with the fact that historically and in modern times Khulo township is located on the trade-caravan road passing through the Achariskali valley (Mgeladze, Narimanishvili, Khalvashi, Tunadze, Shanshashvili, Kamadadze, Okropiridze, 2019: 51-78).

Among the toponyms, the names of places like "Nagutni" and "Nakaloevi" draw attention. The former once again affirms the traditional use of the plow as a plowing tool in Upper Adjara, while the

toponym "Nakaloevi" suggests the existence of Kalooba traditions and bread culture. Ethnographic materials, folklore vocabulary, and microtoponymy related to Kalo and Kalooba are significant and noteworthy.

In the villages of the Georgian population in the Chorokhi basin, some areas, including yards and spaces around houses, were generically referred to as "Kalo." Kalo could denote a yard, the area in front of a house's door - useful for breaking wheat and a place for breaking wheat in a wheat field. In the mountains of Eastern Georgia, there was even a designated place for breaking wheat on the flat roofs of houses. Kalo and Kalooba held great importance across almost all parts of Georgia, as wheat culture was a vital aspect of livelihood for families. Open or closed "Kalo" was used to thresh wheat in the mountainous regions of Georgia. In areas where the toponym "Nakaloevo" is confirmed in family-Ottoman sources, historical practices involved the separation of wheat and rye, with wheat left on the basket being cleaned - sifted through a sieve and thrown into the barn pit. Bze (remnant of the harvested grain), used as livestock feed, was stored in the barn (Mgeladze, 2013: 143-153).

From the extensive information contained in Ottoman-language documents, materials related to surnames stand out. In late medieval Adjara, surnames underwent changes, yet they continued to reflect the social dynamics of public life. This transformation was undoubtedly influenced by the prolonged Ottoman rule. However, it's essential to consider that the tradition of creating surnames and family names emerged relatively late in Georgia, becoming a common practice from the late Middle Ages. Before that, hereditary names in a patronymic style predominated, primarily covering the genealogical structure of several generations.

In earlier times, the inheritance of surnames and family names was limited to higher social circles, such as feudal lineages, and only began to extend to ordinary communities from the late Middle Ages. During this period, Turkish influences became intertwined with the social processes in Adjara due to Ottoman rule. This influence not only hindered the development of Georgian surnames but also, in many cases, altered the manner of suffix production for surnames. The Georgian suffixes -dze and -shvili were replaced by the Ottoman -ogli. Consequently, in Ottoman-language family documents, one can predominantly find hereditary names created with "ogli," with rare exceptions.

Indeed, Ottoman-language family documents encompass a diverse range of materials related to anthroponyms, including personal names, hereditary names of small genealogical groups, and surnames. It becomes evident upon observation that the majority of personal names have Turkish origins. When it comes to surnames, Turkish influences are noticeable, but the Georgian approach to surname formation still maintains its historically characteristic traditionalism in this context.

In Ottoman-language documents, the -ogli formant is mainly attached to human names. Such formation is presented in almost all documents. For example: Husein Halil Oglu, Husein Jeviri Oglu, Mehmed Koroglu. In the list of witnesses or participants in the documents, which is quite numerous, almost everyone's handwriting ends with the suffix -ogli, not the surname formatted according to the Georgian tradition, but the first name and the attached -ogli formant. Among the hereditary names and surnames signed by Ottoman-ogli producers, Dadianoglu (Dadiani), Istanbuloglu (Stambolishvili), Jincharoglu (Jincharadze), Bajunoglu (Bajunashvili), Romanoglu (Romanadze) and others should be distinguished. Such production of names with the -ogli formant was opposite to the construction of the names of social groups, where the ancestor's name was passed from generation to generation, creating a genealogy and finally becoming a hereditary name, although in Adjara we often found such hereditary names with the -ogli suffix attached, but from the point of view of production, they were of Georgian nature. It developed on the patronymic principle and united representatives of several generations under one name. For example, the hereditary name of a person living in the village of Cheri formed with the suffix -ogli - Okropiroglu is not simply attached to the name, but is the name of a genealogical group of several generations. Its equivalent in Georgian is Okropiridze. The same is Romanoglu, the same, Romanadze, Katamoglu - Katamadze. It turns out that -ogli formants instead of -dze and -shvili suffixes produced not only the names of a small group, but also surnames.

Ottoman-language family documents provide intriguing insights into family relations during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, particularly concerning property-legal situations and land ownership. Certain documents meticulously outline the property status of families, offering a glimpse into the economic landscape of Adjara during the specified period.

As per the handwritten documents, various types of agricultural and auxiliary residential buildings are documented as part of some households. For instance: Meregi - an agricultural building; Kishla - an auxiliary agricultural base situated away from the main dwelling area. The term Meregi, as confirmed in Ottoman-language family documents, was predominantly used among the Georgian

population in the Chorokhi basin, particularly in Adjara, Shavsheti, and Tao-Klarjeti. The term Mereg likely relates to the word Maragi (stock). It was often situated separately in the courtyard area, although at times, Meregi was constructed on top of the cattle stall (Akhori). However, it was more common for Meregi to be located a short distance away from the main house. In some cases, wooden Meregi could be distant, such as in the mines. The barn served the purpose of storing hay and the household's annual supplies, including food. In Ottoman-language family documents, the term Kishlaghi, similar to Kishla, is mentioned. Kishla is a more widely used term among the population of Upper Adjara. It denotes the same homestead complex of temporary residential and economic nature, integrated into family property as an auxiliary economic base.

In terms of property rights, the distribution of property among family members, as evidenced by Ottoman-language family documents, is noteworthy. These documents, drafted in accordance with Sharia, indicate that women were frequently granted property rights, particularly in ancestral lands. One document specifies the transfer of a specific portion of land to a woman. Contrary to the general rule and customary law, where women typically did not have the right to own family property during household divisions, the Ottoman-language family documents highlight instances where women were given ownership rights. Indigenous Georgian traditions traditionally allowed women personal property rights, but they were not entitled to an equal share with brothers during household divisions. In Adjara, a woman's personal property, rooted in the family ownership of the house, was represented by the dowry. The dowry encompassed the woman's personal belongings and items acquired during the engagement and wedding periods. Unlike other regions, the dowry in Adjara remained undivided. Girls about to be married were often given goods and livestock in addition to dowry property. This personal property served as the material foundation of women's legal status. The goods included in the dowry retained the daughter-in-law's ownership, even within the husband's family, while any surplus was utilized for common family needs.

The fact that the traditions of the big house in Adjara excluded the alienation of the estate is also significant, although a separate violation took place here as well. In the family Ottoman documents we brought, it is seen that the land was given to the woman (wife) and it was legally regulated by a specific document. This indicates that the bride's father had special merit and authority in the lineage and could receive a dowry estate for the bride from the common family land fund. In general, the transfer of plots of land in dowry characterized the ethnographic reality of other regions of Georgia as well (Kharadze, 1962: 27-28). This fact is verified in ancient Georgian legal monuments and other written sources, literary and historical works (Dolidze, 1953: 306).

Among the Ottoman-language family manuscripts, a noteworthy category comprises documents that address taxes, primarily reflecting the period of Ottoman rule. In one specific Ottoman-language document, there is a reference to Ushri, specifying that the land was acquired under the condition of Ushri, where corn was cultivated and grass was harvested. Ushri was an integral component of these family contracts, firmly established in Adjara in accordance with Ottoman land ownership practices. Historically, the Ushri tax originated in the Arab Caliphate and, through their expansion, was implemented and institutionalized in various regions.

Conclusions:

Ottoman-language family documents encompass highly significant and diverse content from a source knowledge perspective. These materials facilitate the reconstruction of numerous historical and ethnographic episodes from the 19th-20th centuries, offering insights into specific aspects of social, legal, and religious life during that period. Addressed within these documents are topics directly linked to the institution of marriage, challenges related to family life, land measurement units, tax systems, monetary units, geographical names such as districts, villages, and places (toponyms), as well as personal names including anthroponyms, patronymic names, family names, and surnames.

Regarding classification, Ottoman-language documents can be categorized into distinct groups. Some serve as evidence of land ownership, while others document the distribution of land and the ownership held by specific families or kinship groups on allocated land. Additional documents pertain to the division of shares within households and the segmentation of family property. Among these are various certificates and receipts that feature toponyms, anthroponyms, surnames, and nested kinship-genealogical groups prevalent in specific villages. These documents offer valuable material for exploring historical geography, diverse historical facts, and studying the proceedings and structure of official documents from the relevant period. They also provide rich content for researching Ottoman or Russian sphragistics.

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Acknowledgments:

The authors of the article express their gratitude to the population of Adjara, whose families have preserved Ottoman-language documents.