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## ISKEÇE/XANHTI UNDER OTTOMAN RULE: SETTLEMENT, DEMOGRAPHY AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE (14<sup>TH</sup> - 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)

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*Osmanlı İdaresinde İskeçe: İskân, Demografi ve İktisadi Yapı (14-18. Yüzyıl)*

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**Abstract:** İskeçe, or Xanthi, is a city in present-day Greece. It fell under Ottoman territories in 1373 during the reign of Sultan Murad I, following the Battle of Maritsa. In terms of administration, İskeçe was in the status of village affiliated with Yenice-i Karasu township under sanjak of Paşa of the Province of Rumeli. Financially, it was one of vakıf (foundation) villages within Sultan Bayezid II's külliye (Islamic-Ottoman social complex) in Edirne. İskeçe remained under Ottoman rule from the second half of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Moreover, it had become an important Turkish city during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even though it was a mostly Christian settlement. This study examines how İskeçe transformed from a long-time village into a Balkan city. It includes information about its name alongside its history, settlement, demography and economic structure. This study prepared based on Ottoman archival documents will make an important contribution to both the history of İskeçe and history of Western Thrace as the number of individual studies examining İskeçe region is limited.

**Key Words:** İskeçe, Western Thrace, Bayezid II Foundation, census

**Öz:** İskeçe, günümüzde Yunanistan'da bulunan ve Xanti adıyla bilinen bir şehirdir. Sultan I. Murad döneminde Çirmen Savaşı'ndan sonra 1373'te Osmanlı topraklarına katıldı. İdari bakımdan Rumeli eyaletine tabi Paşa sancağının Yenice-i Karasu kazasına bağlı köy statüsünde bulunan İskeçe, mali olarak Sultan II. Bayezid'in Edirne'deki külliyesinin vakıf köyleri arasında yer aldı. XIV. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından XX. yüzyılın başlarına kadar Osmanlı hâkimiyetinde kalan İskeçe, çoğunlukla Hristiyanların meskûn olduğu bir yerleşim birimi iken XVIII. ve XIX. yüzyıllarda önemli bir Türk şehri hâline geldi. Bu çalışmada uzun süre köy statüsünde varlığını sürdüren İskeçe'nin bir Balkan şehri olarak ortaya çıkışı incelenmiştir. İskeçe'nin adı ve tarihi, iskân, demografi ve iktisadi yapısı hakkında bilgilere yer verilmiştir. Osmanlı arşiv belgelerinden yararlanılarak hazırlanan bu çalışma İskeçe bölgesini ele alan müstakil çalışmaların az sayıda olması sebebiyle sadece İskeçe tarihine değil aynı zamanda Batı Trakya tarihine önemli bir katkı sağlayacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İskeçe, Batı Trakya, II. Bayezid Vakfı, tahrir

### Introduction

The city of İskeçe, today known as Xanthi, is a city located in Greece. It is situated partly on the slopes of the Karaoğlan Mountains (Southern Rhodope Mountains) and partly on the plain on both sides of the Esketze River.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the city, which is called as İskete<sup>2</sup>, İsketye<sup>3</sup>, Eskice<sup>4</sup>, Aksanti<sup>5</sup> or Ksanti<sup>6</sup> in Ottoman sources, dates back to the ancient period.<sup>7</sup> Greek historians have put forward some

<sup>1</sup> Machiel Kiel, "İskeçe", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, XXII, İstanbul 2000, 553.

<sup>2</sup> BOA. TT.d. 143, p.51; TKG.M.KK.VKF.Cd.15-2203/2236/8 (Yeni No:8), p.11; BOA. KK.d. 2830, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> BOA. TT.d. 70, p.42; BOA. A.DVNS.MHM.d.116, hüküm 25; BOA. KK.d.2830, p. 11, 39.

<sup>4</sup> BOA. C.ML. Dosya/Gömlek 750/30581.

<sup>5</sup> Şemseddin Sami, "İskeçe", *Kâmusu'l-A'lâm*, II, Mihran Matbaası, İstanbul 1306, p. 937.

<sup>6</sup> *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Edirne*, def'a 27, 1317, p. 447.

<sup>7</sup> Kiel, "İskeçe", p. 553.

views about the name of the town. Accordingly, it has been stated that the name Eskice was either derived from the name of the old town as distinct from the newly established Yenice township, or the name Eskice originated from a Yoruk group who inhabited the town. Alternatively, there is another view that the Byzantine term “Xanhti” was phonetically evolved into the name İskeçe.<sup>8</sup> In the Ottoman archival records, the town was called as İsketye/İskete from the XVth century until the first half of the XVIIIth century.<sup>9</sup> From the end of the XVIIIth century onwards, it was recorded as Eskice/İskeçe.<sup>10</sup> In the XIXth century, two different usages appear in the documents either as İskeçe<sup>11</sup> or İskeçe<sup>12</sup>. As of the second half of the XIXth century, the use of İskeçe became widespread.<sup>13</sup>

The first Turkish raids to the city, which became increasingly important after the Fourth Crusade (1204), were executed during the reign of Aydınoğlu Umur Bey. Before the Ottomans, İskeçe and its neighbourhood were under Serbian rule.<sup>14</sup> Xanhti was located on Via Egnatia, an important trade route between east and west in the Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup> Before the Ottoman conquest, İskeçe was a trading station and a town developed in agricultural production, but after the Ottoman conquest, it was overshadowed by Yenice-i Karasu, which was established to its south. Yenice-i Karasu was settled by Turkish inhabitants and its population increased. This led İskeçe to remain an isolated town until the XIXth century.<sup>16</sup> Travellers who visited the region in the XVth century also drew attention to that.<sup>17</sup>

The Ottoman chronicles, providing information on the conquest of İskeçe, state that Evrenos Bey, upon having taken Gümülcine (Komotini), made it a frontier station and then, by the order of Sultan Murad I, he continued his forward campaign and took over the town.<sup>18</sup> The sources indicate that İskeçe was surrendered by “asking for mercy”.<sup>19</sup> In the chronicles, the date of the conquest of İskeçe was recorded with different dates such as 767/1365- 1366<sup>20</sup>, after 783/1381-1382<sup>21</sup> and 787/1385-1386<sup>22</sup>. In Hadîdî’s history, which was written in verse, the conquest of Xanhti was recorded without a date:

<sup>8</sup> Ioannis M. Bakirtzis-Nicolaos Th. Constantinides, “Administrative Division and Toponymic Tradition in the Xanhti and Ghenisea Region, from the Beginning of Ottoman Rule Until 1928”, *Festschrift in Honor of Ioannis P. Theocharides, Studies on Ottoman Empire and Turkey II*, (ed. Evangelia Balta vd.), (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2014), p.7.

<sup>9</sup> BOA. KK.d. 2830, p.11, 39; BOA. MAD.d.2908, p.52; BOA. MAD.d.14921, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> BOA. C.ML. Dosya/Gömlek 750/30581; BOA. C.DH. Dosya/Gömlek 11/549; BOA. C.BLD. Dosya/Gömlek 106/5288; BOA. İ.MVL. Dosya/Gömlek 113/2680; TSMA.E.1152/35; BOA. C.ZB. Dosya/Gömlek 47/2350.

<sup>11</sup> BOA. C.DH. Dosya/Gömlek 336/16781; BOA. C.AS. Dosya/Gömlek 93/4268.

<sup>12</sup> BOA. AE.SSLM.III Dosya/Gömlek 142/8568.

<sup>13</sup> BOA. A.MKT.MVL. Dosya/Gömlek 126/99; BOA. İ.MVL. Dosya/Gömlek 446/19864; BOA. A.MKT.DV. Dosya/Gömlek 144/8; *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Edirne*, def’a 27, 1317, p. 447.

<sup>14</sup> Kiel, “İskeçe”, p. 553.

<sup>15</sup> Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, “O Kazás Geniséas (Yenice-i Karasu) mésa apó tis othomanikés pigés tou 15ou- 16ou ai. Provlímata kai prooptikés tis erevnas”, *Peri Thrakis*, Xanhti 2001, p.71; Anna Avramea, “MÖ. 2. Yüzyıl İle MS. 6. Yüzyıl Arasında Via Egnatia’nın Güzergâhı ve İşlevi”, *Sol Kol, Osmanlı Egemenliğinde Via Egnatia (1380-1699)*, (ed. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou), (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p.15-17; Bakirtzis-Constantinides, “Administrative Division and Toponymic Tradition in the Xanhti and Ghenisea Region”, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Kotzageorgis, “O Kazás Geniséas (Yenice-i Karasu)”, p.70-73; Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, “Apo to B’ Miso Tou 15ou Mehri ta Teli Tou 17ou Aiona”, *Thriskeutika Mnimia Sto Nomo*, Xanthis 2005, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> Stéphane Yerasimos, *Les voyageurs dans l’Empire ottoman (xive-xvie siècles)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991), p. 35

<sup>18</sup> Derviş Ahmed Aşıkî, *Aşıkpaşazâde Tarihi*, (haz. Necdet Öztürk), (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2013), 84; Mehmed Neşri, *Cihannüma*, (haz. Necdet Öztürk), (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2013), 91. *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, (haz. Necdet Öztürk), (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2015), 28; Oruç bin Adil, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, (haz. Necdet Öztürk), (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2014), 27.

<sup>19</sup> Ayşegül Çalı, *Gazi Evrenos Bey*, (doctoral dissertation), Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara 2011, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Oruç bin Adil, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Mehmed Neşri, *Cihannüma*, p. 91.

*Gümülcine'de Evrenos-ı Gazi  
Ederdi kâfire çok dürlü bâzı*

*Marulya, Bori, İsketye tamâmın  
Muti' etdi harâca hâs u âmın*

It was expressed in above verses<sup>23</sup> In his work Tacü't-Tevârih, Hoca Sadeddin Efendi reports that İskeçe was occupied by Evrenos Bey in 775/1373.<sup>24</sup>

Following the battle of Çirmen (Chernomen) between the Ottoman forces and the Serbs in 1372, İskeçe and its neighbourhood were annexed to the Ottoman territory by Evrenos Bey after the Serbian domination in Western Thrace and Macedonia ended.<sup>25</sup> Halil İnalçık states that some of the dates in the chronicles on the first stage conquests are incorrect and that İskeçe was occupied as a result of the new conquest movement that was launched in June 775/1373.<sup>26</sup> Greek historians also acknowledged the beginning of Ottoman rule in İskeçe and its neighbourhood on the same date.<sup>27</sup>

The region of Western Thrace, which includes the cities of İskeçe (Xanthi), Gümülcine (Komotini) and Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis) and is today within the borders of Greece,<sup>28</sup> was administratively affiliated to the province of Rumelia from the beginning of the Ottoman rule.<sup>29</sup> As such, İskeçe was incorporated into the administrative structure as the largest village settlement in the Yenice-i Karasu<sup>30</sup> township of the Pasha sanjak of the Rumelia province. In the endowment of the reign of Sultan Selim I, which set the boundaries of the properties owned by the Foundation of Sultan Bayezid II, it was stated that the town named as İsketye was subordinate to Yenice.<sup>31</sup> Administratively, the town of İskeçe remained under the Yenice-i Karasu township until the second half of the XIXth century. In 1860, an application was filed for the transfer of the central township from Yenice-i Karasu to İskeçe.<sup>32</sup> As per this request, the centre of the township was transferred from Yenice-i Karasu to İskeçe in 1291/1874-1875.<sup>33</sup> In the archival records dated 1875, there is information that İskeçe became the centre of the township.<sup>34</sup>

In the XVth century, the Ottomans initiated production of rice in the plain of İskeçe and brought a serious economic boom to the region. Many of the Christians of the Yenice-i Karasu township resided in İskeçe, the foundation of the complex of Sultan Bayezid II in Edirne. This

<sup>23</sup> *Hadîdî Tarihi*, (haz. Necdet Öztürk), (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları), 2015, p. 93.

<sup>24</sup> Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevârih*, I, (haz. İsmet Parmaksızoğlu), (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1992), p. 143.

<sup>25</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, I, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2011), (10. Baskı), p. 171; Yusuf Halaçoğlu-Halit Eren, "Batı Trakya", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, V, İstanbul 1992, p. 144; Fahameddin Başar, "Evrenosoğulları", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, 11, İstanbul 1995, p. 540; Levent Kayapınar, "Yunanistan'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti'nin Kurulması (1361- 1461)", *Türkler*, IX, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), p. 193; Erhan Afyoncu, "Osmanlı İdaresinde Yunanistan", *Balkanlar El Kitabı*, I, (edit. Osman Karatay- Bilgehan A. Gökdag), Karam- Vadi Yayınları, 2006, p. 331; Mehmet İnbaşı, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu", *Osmanlılar-İslam Tarihi ve Medeniyeti*, XII, Siyer Yayınları, İstanbul 2018, p. 81.

<sup>26</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Murad I", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, 2020, XXXI, p. 159.

<sup>27</sup> Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, "O Kazás Geniséas (Yenice-i Karasu) mésa apó tis othomanikés pigés tou 15ou- 16ou ai. Provlímata kai prooptikés tis erevnas", *Peri Thrakis*, Xanthi 2001, p. 70; Bakirtzis-Constantinides, "Administrative Division and Toponymic Tradition in the Xanthi and Ghenisea Region, from the Beginning of Ottoman Rule Until 1928", p. 3; Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, "Apo to B' Miso Tou 15ou Mehri ta Teli Tou 17ou Aiona", *Thriskeutika Mnimia Sto Nomo*, Xanthi 2005, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> İlker Alp, "Batı Trakya Türkleri", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, XI/ 33, Ankara 1995, p. 613-614.

<sup>29</sup> Halaçoğlu-Eren, "Batı Trakya", p. 145.

<sup>30</sup> BOA. TT.d. 167, p.20; BOA. MAD. d. 59, vr. 314b; BOA. KK.d.2830, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> BOA. TT.d. 70, p.42; TKG.M.KK.VKF.Cd.15-2203/2236/8 (Yeni No:8), p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> BOA. İ.MVL. Dosya/Gömlek 446/19864; BOA. A.MKT.MVL. Dosya/Gömlek 126/99

<sup>33</sup> *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Edirne*, def'a 27, 1317, p. 448.

<sup>34</sup> BOA. ŞD. Dosya/Gömlek 2006/18, 2006/23

privileged and well-protected status allowed İskeçe to flourish and grow.<sup>35</sup> According to the records of the 1594 Bayezid II Foundation, the town of İskeçe stands out among the settlements subordinated to the Yenice-i Karasu township with its huge amount of revenue.<sup>36</sup> The concentration of Christians around İskeçe and the long-lasting preservation of its Christian identity are attributed to some specific reasons. Firstly, Yenice-i Karasu was established as a new Turkish settlement by the Ottomans as an administrative centre and a trading hub. Secondly, the Christian population around İskeçe migrated there after the Ottoman conquest.<sup>37</sup>

Evliya Çelebi visited İskeçe on his way to the Siege of Candia in Crete Island in 1078/1668 and gave detailed information about it. According to Evliya Çelebi, İskeçe is a town with a total of 500 tiled, well-maintained vineyards and orchards, with the windows of all the houses facing towards the qibla at the foot of the mountains. There were 1 mosque, 3 masjids, 1 hammam, 1 madrasah, 2 imarets, 2 dervish lodges, and many shops in the town where half of the population was Turkish and the other half was Christian.<sup>38</sup>

Continuing its development in agriculture and trade under Ottoman rule, İskeçe was administratively larger and more commercially developed than Yenice-i Karasu, to which it was administratively subordinated, until the second half of the XIXth century. It featured with its high-quality tobacco production and its trade. Cereals and many other crops were abundantly cultivated in İskeçe, which had very fertile soils. However, the main source of its people's wealth was tobacco production and trade. The products grown in İskeçe were shipped from Karaağaç Pier.<sup>39</sup> Tobacco and cereals were the main agricultural products, while cheese and butter were the main animal foodstuff. A significant portion of the products were sold to other regions and abroad.<sup>40</sup> At the end of the XVIIth century, six different types of tobacco were produced in the empire. The highest quality tobacco was grown in Yenice-i Karasu and Vardar Yenice, including İskeçe.<sup>41</sup> Tobacco production contributed to the economic and demographic growth and development of the town of İskeçe.<sup>42</sup> It is understood from the archival records that in addition to agricultural production, which constituted the basis of İskeçe's wealth, mining was also developed there.<sup>43</sup>

Having been under Ottoman rule for almost 539 years from 1373 to 1912, İskeçe became an important Turkish settlement in the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries.<sup>44</sup> With the Treaty of Bucharest of 10 August 1913, which was signed at the end of the Balkan War, Western Thrace was ceded to Bulgaria and thus İskeçe, the majority of the population of which were Muslim Turks, was no longer under Turkish sovereignty.<sup>45</sup>

İskeçe, which was an important settlement for agricultural production and trading before the Ottoman conquest, was overshadowed by the newly established Yenice-i Karasu after the Ottoman conquest. Administratively, it maintained its village status until the second half of the XIXth century. This study investigates the emergence of İskeçe as a Balkan city after its long existence as a town with village status. It includes information about the name, history,

<sup>35</sup> Machiel Kiel, "Yenice-i Karasu", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, 43, İstanbul 2013, p. 444.

<sup>36</sup> Alaaddin Aköz-Doğan Yörük, "H.1002/ M.1594 Tarihli Bir Vakıf Defterine Göre Edirne'deki Sultan II. Bâyezid Câmii ve İmâreti Evkâfı", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* (2004), p. 163.

<sup>37</sup> Bakirtzis-Constantinides, "Administrative Division and Toponymic Tradition in the Xanthi and Ghenisea Region", s. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnâme*, VII-VIII, indeksli tıpkıbasım, (haz. Seyit Ali Kahraman), (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), vr. 215a.

<sup>39</sup> Şemseddin Sami, "İskeçe", p. 937.

<sup>40</sup> *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Edirne*, def'a 27, 1317, p. 449.

<sup>41</sup> Fehmi Yılmaz, "Tütün", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, 42, İstanbul 2012, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Maria Giannopoulou-Yiannis Roukounis-Anastasia Roukouni, "The Tobacco Warehouses of Xanthi", *International Conference: Cities As Creative Spaces for Cultural Tourism*, İstanbul 2009, p. 5-7.

<sup>43</sup> BOA. KK.d.5177, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Kiel, "İskeçe", p. 553.

<sup>45</sup> Halacıoğlu-Eren, "Bati Trakya", p. 145.



administrative structure, housing and demography of İskeçe. This study is certain to make a significant contribution to the history of Western Thrace in general and İskeçe in particular, since there are few independent studies<sup>46</sup> that focus on the region of İskeçe according to Ottoman archival documents.

### 1. Sources

Cadastral record books stand out among the sources used in this study. In the XVIth century, İskeçe was among the villages of Yenice-i Karasu township. The accounting brief cadastral registers dated 1530, in which İskeçe is also included, is numbered 167. This cadastral register was published as the Vilayet-i Rum-ili. The register contains data on the townships located in the left branch of the Pasha sanjak. On page 26 of the register, İskeçe is listed among the villages of the Sultan Bayezid II Foundation. It was registered under the title “Evkâf-ı imâret-i cedit-i merhum Sultan Bayezid Han aleyhi’r-rahman ve’l-gufran der-Edirne, karye-i İsketye tabi-i el-mezbûr”.<sup>47</sup>

The Foundation Register, numbered TT.d 306, dated 9 Jumaziyelevvel 965 / 27 February 1558, is a copy of the atik (treasury) register of the Sultan Bayezid II Foundation.<sup>48</sup> It appears that the first part of the register is incomplete. İskeçe was mentioned as “Karye-i İskete an evkâf-ı m” under the title of Yenice-i Karasu township on page 75 of this register.<sup>49</sup>

The register in Kuyud-u Kadîme Achieve of General Directorate of Cadastral Land Registry No. 416 dated 1568 contains records of foundations in Temurhisar, Yenice-i Karasu, Kavala, Drama, Siroz, and Nevrekop. This register includes the village of İsketye under the Sultan Bayezid Foundation between folios 31a-36b.<sup>50</sup>

The Foundation Register<sup>51</sup> numbered TT.d 979, which contains the results of the registers made in the first years of the reign of Sultan Murad III, contains the foundation records of the Bayezid Mosque Complex of Sultan Bayezid II in Edirne. Page 85 of the register contains the law code of İsketye. Pages 86-99 of the register contain data pertaining to the town of İsketye.<sup>52</sup>

The Kuyud-u Kadîme Achieve of General Directorate of Cadastral Land Registry contains registers of Yenice-i Karasu and the Sultan Bayezid II Foundation. The register numbered 2502 and dated 17 Cemaziyelahir 998 / 23 April 1590 is the detailed foundation register of the mosque, alms-house and hospital of the Edirne Foundation of Sultan Bayezid II. There is a code of law for the village of İsketye on page 44 of the register, followed by the centre of İskeçe and its neighbourhoods under the heading “der-kazâ-i Yenice-i Karasu karye-i İsketye tabi-i kazâ-i m”.<sup>53</sup>

The register numbered 14781 in the Catalogue of Financial Affairs (Maliyeden Müdevver Kataloğu) contains the records of jizya taxpayers of the Edirne Foundation of Sultan Bayezid II.

<sup>46</sup> This situation was also expressed by Greek historians: Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, “O Kazás Geniséas (Yenice-i Karasu) mésa apó tis othomanikés pigés tou 15ou- 16ou ai. Provlímata kai prooptikés tis erevnas”, *Peri Thrakis*, Xanthi 2001, p. 69-84.

<sup>47</sup> *167 Numaralı Muhasebe-i Vilayet-i Rûm-ili Defteri (937/1530)*, I, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2003), p. 20-29.

<sup>48</sup> In the introduction of the archive document: “Dârende-i Sultan Bayezid Han İmaretinin atik defteri suretidir” contains information in the form of: BOA. TT.d 306, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> BOA. TT.d. 306, p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> TKGM. Kuyud-u Kadîme Arşivi, TT.d. 416 (Eski No:577), vr. 31a-36b.

<sup>51</sup> The date of the book is shown as 1575 by Phokion P. Kotzageorgis. Phokion P. Kotzageorgis, *Andri Kosmos Timitikós Tómos ston Kathigiti Konstantino K. Chatzópoulo*, “Nees Othomanikes Pigés Gia Tin Proimi Neoteri Istoría Tis Xanthis”, Ekdóticos Oikos K. & M. Stamouli/Ioannis Arch. Charpantidis, Thessaloniki 2019, p. 251.

<sup>52</sup> BOA. TT.d. 979, p. 85-99.

<sup>53</sup> TKGM. Kuyud-u Kadîme Arşivi, TT.d. 2502 (Eski No: 93), p. 44-49.

The register bears the signature of Sultan Ahmed I at the head. The data pertaining to the village of İsketye appears on pages 2-12 of the register.<sup>54</sup>

The register numbered 59 in the Catalogue of Financial Affairs contains the avarız records of Pasha, the brigadier general. The data pertaining to Yenice-i Karasu township is dated 1088/1677-78 and is between the folios 314b-317b of the register. The subjects of İsketye village who were exempted are registered miners, salt makers, and horse trainers.<sup>55</sup>

The register dated 1099/1688, which was registered with number 15053 in the Catalogue of Financial Affairs is brief register of jizya of the villages subordinated to Sultan Bayezid Foundation, and 390 jizya taxpaying households are registered in İsketye village.<sup>56</sup>

The register dated 1088/1677-78 and numbered 2676 in the Kamil Kepeci classification is a detailed avarız register of the Yenice-i Karasu township, which was registered by İbrahim Efendi. The pages 24-37 of the register include the avarız households and exempt subjects of the İsketye village.<sup>57</sup>

## 2. Housing and Demography

According to the foundation register of the complex of Sultan Bayezid II in Edirne, there were 345 Muslim and non-Muslim households in İskeçe in 898/1493. The total revenue of the village was 29988 akces. This register indicates that İskeçe was built at the foot of a mountain, surrounded by many rivers and neighbouring the village of Şerefeddin.<sup>58</sup> In the cadastral register dated 925/1519, the village, which was subordinated to the Sultan Bayezid II Foundation, was registered with 22 Muslim households and 22 single men (mücerred), 483 non-Muslim households, 56 single men, and 67 widows. The annual revenue from the cultivation of olives, walnuts and almonds was 1600 akces and the total revenue was 40656 akces.<sup>59</sup> According to the cadastral register numbered 143 and dated 934, İskeçe was a settlement subordinated to Sultan Bayezid Foundation.<sup>60</sup> In the 1530 dated brief register of the accounting, there were 19 Muslim households and 13 single men and 569 non-Muslim households and 69 single men in İskeçe, which consisted of seven neighbourhoods. The annual tax revenue was 48937 akces.<sup>61</sup> From the end of the XVth century until the 1530s, the population of İskeçe increased. This increase was mainly due to migration to the town, which had fertile agricultural fields.

The names of neighbourhoods in the settlements where non-Muslims were mostly populated in Rumelia under Ottoman rule were usually recorded with the names of clergymen in the registers. In the town of İskeçe, neighbourhoods were named after priests.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>54</sup> BOA. MAD.d. 14781, p. 2-12.

<sup>55</sup> BOA. MAD.d. 59, vr. 314b-317b.

<sup>56</sup> BOA. MAD.d. 15053, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> BOA. KK.d. 2676, p. 24-37.

<sup>58</sup> TKGM.KK.VKF.Cd.15-2203/2236/8 (Yeni No:8), p. 11-13.

<sup>59</sup> BOA. TT.d. 70, p. 42.

<sup>60</sup> BOA. TT.d. 143, p. 51.

<sup>61</sup> *167 Numaralı Muhasebe-i Vilayet-i Rûm-ili Defteri (937/1530)*, p. 26.

<sup>62</sup> Phokión P. Kotzageórgis, *Andri Kosmos Timitikós Tómos ston Kathigiti Konstantino K. Chatzópoulo*, "Nees Othomanikes Piges Gia Tin Proimi Neoteri Istoría Tis Xanthis", Ekdotikos Oikos K. & M. Stamouli/Ioannis Arch. Charpantidis, Thessaloniki 2019, p. 252.



**Table 1. İskeçe in 1558**

	Muslim		Nonmuslim	
	Hane	Mücerred	Hane	Mücerred
Nefs-i İskeçe	44	11		
Bulgaz Papa Atoni Mahallesi			117	20
Kiryako Mahallesi				
Papa Pop Mahallesi			114	13
Vergosino Papa Yani Mahallesi			112	11
Papa Yani Apokendil Mahallesi			101	8
Papa Yani Prodroho Mahallesi			100	15
Papa Linimo Papa Blaso Mahallesi			69	7
Papa Anifendlo Mahallesi			96	8
Papa Ayok-Ayo Todor Mahallesi			102	13
Cemaat-i Çingenegân			37	
Yörügan	7			
Hariç Reaya			32	

*Source:* BOA. TT.d. 306, p. 75-87.

In the cadastral register dated 1558, there were 44 Muslim households and 11 single male inhabitants in İskeçe. In the town of İskeçe, 811 households and 95 single men, all of whom were non-Muslims, were registered in 9 neighbourhoods. The community of Gypsies is registered as 37 households, excluded subjects as 32 households and Yoruks (nomads) as 7 households. When these data were compared with the 1530 cadastral registers, the number of Muslim households increased from 19 to 44 and the number of non-Muslim households increased from 569 to 811. These data indicated that the population of the town increased beyond the normal population growth. The fertile lands of the town in particular and the stability of the Ottoman Empire in general during this period led to an increase in the population in the region of İskeçe as in other places.

**Table 2. İskeçe in 1568**

	Muslim		Non-muslim	
	Hane	Mücerred	Hane	Mücerred
Nefs-i İskeçe	26			
Bulgaz Papa Atoni Mahallesi			87	96
Yani Pop Mahallesi			99	40
Dergoniko Papa Yani Mahallesi			77	65
Papa Yani Mahallesi			61	41
Papa Yani Prodroho Mahallesi			64	53
Panelçilo Papa Malasho Mahallesi			84	119
Andelyo Mahallesi			72	47
Papa Aya Todor-u Cedit Mahallesi			80	69
Dalyancıyan			14	
Cemaat-i Çingane			47	
Cemaat-i Çingane Mahalle-i Ayanom-u Cedit			14	

*Source:* TKGM. KK. TT.d. 577 (Yeni no:416), vr. 31a-36b.

In 1568, in the town of İskeçe, there were 26 Muslim households and 624 non-Muslim households, 530 single men, as well as 61 Gypsy households and 14 fishermen households. Compared to the 1558 cadastral register, there was a decrease in the number of Muslim and non-Muslim households in the town. In the 1568 register, Muslims were recorded as households and non-Muslims were recorded as households and single men. When compared with the data of the 1558 register, there was a decrease in the non-Muslim population in 1568 in terms of households, while the increase in the number of single men was quite high. While the number of non-Muslim households decreased from 811 to 624, the number of single men increased from 95 to 530. This increase in the number of single men is related to the engagement in the agricultural production activities of the region. A large number of single young people from the surrounding area migrated to the town of İskeçe, with its fertile lands. The increase in the amount of taxes collected from İskeçe clearly demonstrates this situation. Taxes obtained from both agricultural production and commercial activities increased in the town. On the other hand, the increase in the number of single men is also associated with the Ottoman tax applications and the periodical variations in the registration of single men in the registers. In fact, single men were not entered in the registers of İskeçe during and after the reign of Sultan Murad III.

**Table 3. İskeçe during the reign of Sultan Murad III**

	Muslim		Non-muslim	
	Hane	Mücerred	Hane	Mücerred
İskeçe-Nefs	20	12		
Bulgaz Papa Atoni beca-yı Papa Papuci			105	
Papa Duka			142	
Papa Gorgoyiko			143	
Papa Yani Alkari ve Papa Diyako			97	
Papa Atoni			98	
Papa Kalodi nam-ı diğer Ayo Yani Prodrom			133	
Papa Manol nam-ı diğer Ayo Todor			143	
Papa Yani Apokendil			106	
Papa Blaso nam-ı diğer Pandelimo			115	
Cemaat-i Kıbtıyan			35	
Hariç reaya			60	

*Source:* BOA. TT.d. 979, p. 85-99.

The Muslims in İskeçe, which was re-registered during the reign of Sultan Murad III, were registered as households and single men. While non-Muslims were registered as households, there were no single men in the registers. The Muslim population consisted of 20 households and 12 single men, while the non-Muslim population consisted of 1082 households. 35 gypsy and 60 household excluded subjects were recorded in the register in the town. When the non-Muslim population was analysed on the household basis, there was an increase in the number of households in the town of İskete compared to the previous register (1568). While 624 non-Muslim households and 530 single men were registered in the town in 1568, the number of households reached 1082 in the register, held during the reign of Sultan Murad III, in which single men were not registered. The most significant cause of the increase in the number of households in a short period of time is that those who were registered as single men in the previous register were registered in the status of household in the new registration. In 1568, the total number of non-Muslim households and single men was 1168. The total number of households registered in the new register was 1082.

**Table 4. İskeçe in 1590**

	Muslim		Nonmuslim	
	Hane	Mücerred	Hane	Mücerred
Nefs-i İskeçe	20	7		
Bulgaz -Papa Eskofa Mahallesi			75	
Papa Duka Mahallesi			88	
Gorgoyika Mahallesi			103	
Papa Diyako – Teneşad Mahallesi			52	
Papa Etum Mahallesi			60	
Papa Kalo Diyodrem Mahallesi			89	
Papa Manol Mahallesi			86	
Papa Yani Ayolendik			46	
Papa Blaso - Pandelimo Mahallesi			123	
Cemaat-i Kıbtıyan			55	

*Source:* TKGM. Kuyûd-u Kadîme Arşivi, TT.d. 2502 (Eski No: 93), p. 44-49.

In the 1590 cadastral register issued at the end of the XVIth century, Muslims in İskeçe were registered as households and single men. The non-Muslim households were entered in the register and the single men were not included as in the previous register. The Muslim population consisted of 20 households and 7 single men, while the non-Muslim population consisted of 722 households. There were also 55 Gypsy households in the town. There was no change in the Muslim population of the town on the basis of households compared to the previous register, and the number of single men decreased from 12 to 7. There was a drastic decrease in the non-Muslim population of the town. While the number of households in the town was 1082 in the register issued in the first years of the reign of Sultan Murad III, this number decreased to 722 in 1590. This decrease in population was related to the organisation of the registers. In addition, some of the non-Muslim population in İskeçe migrated.

**Table 5. İskeçe in 1606**

Yerleşim adı	Muslim		Nonmuslim	
	Hane	Mücerred	Hane	Mücerred
Nefs-i İskeçe				
Papa Mihal - Aya Yorgi Mahallesi			100	
Aya Olasi Papa - Papa Oskom Mahallesi			71	
Todorem Mahallesi			113	
Papa Etum Mahallesi			54	
Ayakendil - Mardarikse Mahallesi			59	
Podmonika - Papa Todor Mahallesi			123	
Pandelimo Mahallesi			129	
Paksazi Mahallesi			39	
Aya Todori - Dinom Mahallesi			97	
Todor Semerci Mahallesi			40	

*Source:* BOA. MAD.d. 14781, p. 1-12

The register data of İskeçe during the reign of Sultan Ahmed I is provided in the table. Accordingly, 825 non-Muslim households were registered in the town. Since the 1606 register contains jizya records, Muslims were not included in this register. According to the 1590 register data, there was an increase in the population of the town. The non-Muslim population, which was registered as 722 households in 1590, reached 825 households in 1606. These data indicated that the population of the town became stabilised again as of the end of the XVIth century. The Ottoman Empire underwent some changes in the central and provincial administration as from the late XVIth century. Consequently, the comprehensive imperial registration was replaced with avarız and jizya enumerations. The use of avarız and jizya registers instead of cadastral registers for demography and housing surveys has gained prominence.<sup>63</sup> The town of İskeçe has avarız and jizya records from the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. However, since the records are not detailed, they contain no detailed information about the town. According to the data of the identified registers, the avarız register dated 1088/1677-1678 included 35 Muslim households and 22 non-Muslim households in the centre of İskeçe. Muslims and non-Muslims were considered 18 avarız households. Accordingly, an avarız household consisted of 3 real households. 97 non-Muslim miner, 77 salt maker and 22 horse trainer households-soldiers, which were exempt from avarız, were also registered in the town.<sup>64</sup> In the jizya register dated 1099/1688, 390 soldiers were registered as jizya (poll tax) payer in İskeçe, which was recorded as a village subordinated to the Sultan Bayezid II Foundation.<sup>65</sup> According to the avarız enumeration dated 1123/1711-1712, 5 military (imam, muazzin, sheikh, preacher, guardian), 36 Muslim households and 22 non-Muslim households were registered in İskeçe.<sup>66</sup> In 1134/1722, 45 Muslim households, 74 non-Muslim households, 77 salt makers, and 21 horse trainers were registered in İskeçe.<sup>67</sup> As for the number of avarız households, 3 real households were considered as one avarız household in 1677 and this persisted in the XVIIIth century. The fact that an avarız unit was composed of a minimum number of real households indicates that the townspeople were economically rich.

### 3. Economic Outlook

Agricultural production was well developed in the town of İskeçe. Having fertile agricultural lands, cereal crops and especially vine cultivation had a particular place in the economy of the town. Wheat, barley, maize, and rye stand out among cereal crops. Olive, silk, hemp and almond production was also developed. Vine cultivation and the must obtained from this cultivation was the product with the highest agricultural revenue on an annual basis. Recorded in the registers as “must” or “bağât” (vineyard), vine cultivation constituted the largest tax item in the annual agricultural revenue of the town. The must was sold in a monopolised market organization.

Besides agricultural production, people also engaged in husbandry in the town of İskeçe. Pig raising and sheep and goat farming were common in the town, where a great majority of the population was non-Muslim. Taxes related to pig raising were registered as “pigs” and “pig butchery” in the cadastral registers.

<sup>63</sup> Oktay Özel, “17. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Demografi ve İskân Tarihi İçin Önemli Bir Kaynak: Mufassal Avârız Defterleri”, *XII. Türk Tarih Kongresi (Ankara, 12-16 Eylül 1994), Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, III, Ankara 1999, p. 738; Yunus Koç, “Osmanlı’da Kent İskânı ve Demografisi (XV-XVIII. Yüzyıllar)”, *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 3/6, İstanbul 2005, p. 183-184.

<sup>64</sup> BOA. KK.d. 2676, p. 24-37; BOA. MAD.d. 59, vr. 314b-317b.

<sup>65</sup> BOA. MAD.d. 15053, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> BOA. KK.d.2830, p. 39.

<sup>67</sup> BOA. KK.d. 2830, p. 48-60.

**Table 6. Annual Revenue/Akce of Agricultural and Livestock Production in the Town of İskeçe**

Agricultural and Livestock	1558	1568	Reign of Sultan Murad III
	Annual Revenue	Annual Revenue	Annual Revenue
Gallât ve hububât		4000	
Zeytun		1600	2597
Harir			1220
Gendüm			2390
Kenevir	2033		
Erzen	416		60
Şair	401		76
Alef	231		24
Çavdar	81		81
Mercimek	48		80
Gügül	900	3500	
Safran		100	15
Badam	1500		2040
Pelud	133		
Hasıl---	80		
Şıra (Monopolya)	14500		21144
Dönüm-i bağât		30000	
Bağât-ı müslümanân			132
Ağıl resmi			45
Bojik			200
Hanazir	350		181
Kovan	384		
Ağnam	3130		1309

Source: BOA. TT.d. 306, p.87; TKGM. KK. TT.d. 577 (New no:416), vr.36a-36b; BOA. TT.d. 979, p.99.

**Table 7. Miscellaneous Taxes, Duties, and Mukataas/Akce in the Town of İskeçe**

Miscellaneous Taxes, Duties, and Mukataas	1558		1568		Reign of Sultan Murad III	
	Nefer-Hane	Annual Revenue	Nefer-Hane	Annual Revenue	Nefer-Hane	Annual Revenue
Bennak			16	192	19	209
Mücerred			10	60	12	82
İspenç-Hane	701	17525	591	14775	1090	27210
İspenç-Mücerred	90	2250	532	13325		
Kıbtıyan			47	1175	35	875
Bive	74	444				
Resm-i tapu, tapu-yı zemin		240				250
Resm-i ---						1600
Mukataa						5437
Asiyab		200				
Asiyab (69 bab, 68 bab, 68 bâb)		1679		1800		1560
Harc						80
Harc-ı maden-i sim				200		
Kiremid		250		350		
İhtisab ve bac-ı bazar ve bac-ı kantar ve resm-i bojik ve harir		3767				
Bac-ı bazar ve bac-ı kantar ve bâc-ı gâv-ı gânem gayrihi				15000		

Bac-1 bazar ve bac-1 kantar ve bâc-1 gâv-1 gânem gayrihi			15000		
Bac-1 tay, ağnâm ve esb ve gâv ve bâc-1 kantar ve bâc-1 hamr-1 haml	1000				2500
Keyl	1000		10000		
İhtisab ve ihzariyye	4000				10666
Mahsûl-i mevzi (haricden ziraat iderler)	500		500		
Mahsûl-i mâl-1 gayib ve beytü'l-mâl ve mâl-1 mefkûd	550		500		
Mahsûl-i Manastır-1 Keşişân	40		300		360
Müjdegân					200
Niyabet ve resm-i arûs, deştbanî ve tapu-yî zemin			600		600
Niyabet ve cürm-i cinâyet ve bad-1 hevâ ve adet-i deştbanî ve beytü'l-mâl ve mâl-1 gaib ve mâl-1 mefkûd ve baha-yî kaçkûn-u kul ve cariyeye ve baha-yî ve yave-i gânem esb ve ve haymane ve resm-i duhân-1 haymane ve gayri.					1000

*Source:* BOA. TT.d. 306, p.87; TKGM. KK. TT.d. 577 (New no:416), vr.36a-36b; BOA. TT.d. 979, p.99.

According to the table of various taxes, duties, and mukataas in the town of İskeçe, 12 akces was levied on Muslim households in the category of bennak, 6 akces on single men, 25 akces on non-Muslim households, single men and gypsy under the name of individual tax, and 6 akces on Christian widow women who were registered as bivê (widow) in the town. The amount of tax levied on single men was higher than in other township and sanjaks. In fact, the Ottoman Empire generally levied 6 akces of tax on single men. In the town of İskeçe, on the other hand, single men were treated as households and 25 akces was collected from them. One of the noteworthy circumstances in the cadastral registers of the town is that while the non-Muslim tax population was recorded as household and single men in the 1568 registers, in the registers organised during the reign of Murad III, single men were not included and the non-Muslim population was recorded as household.

The amount of bac (bazaar tax) and dues collected from commercial activities in the town is striking. Taxes recorded in the register as public order tax, bazaar tax, and cereal measurement indicate the commercial development of the town. Located on the Via Egetia trade route in the Middle Ages, İskeçe maintained its feature also during the Ottoman period. The town, where agricultural production and husbandry flourished, maintained its development as a trading hub.

### Conclusion

In Ottoman sources, İskeçe was named as İskete, İsketye, Eskice, Aksanti or Ksanti. In the XIXth century, two different usages appear in the documents either as İskeçe or İskece. As of the second half of the XIXth century, the use of İskeçe became widespread.

Situated on the Via Egetia, an important trade route between east and west in the Middle Ages, İskeçe was a trading station and a town developed in agricultural production before the Ottoman conquest. However, after the Ottoman conquest it was overshadowed by Yenice-i Karasu, which was established to its south. This led İskeçe to remain an isolated town until the XIXth century.

İskeçe was annexed to the Ottoman lands in 1373 after the Battle of Çirmen (Chernomen) during the reign of Sultan Murad I. Administratively, İskeçe had the status of a village subordinated to the Yenice-i Karasu township of the Pasha sanjak of the Rumelia province, and financially it was among the foundation villages of the complex of Sultan Bayezid II in Edirne. İskeçe, which remained under Ottoman rule from the second half of the XIVth century until the beginning of the XXth century, was a settlement mostly inhabited by Christians, but became an important Turkish city in the XIXth century.

The initiation of rice production in the plain of Xanhti in the XVth century improved the economic activities of the town. This led many of the Christians of Yenice-i Karasu township to gather in İskeçe. According to the 1594 Bayezid II Foundation registers dated 1594, it is noteworthy that the amount of revenue of the town of İskeçe is high among the settlements subordinated to the Yenice-i Karasu township. The establishment of Yenice-i Karasu as a new central township and the migration of the Christian population around İskeçe after the Ottoman conquest played a major role in the long-term preservation of the Christian identity of İskeçe.

The archival records of İskeçe from the Ottoman period can be accessed in the cadastral registers of the Yenice-i Karasu township and the foundation registers of the complex of Sultan Bayezid II in Edirne. According to these records, there were 345 Muslim and non-Muslim households in İskeçe in 1493. During the reign of Sultan Murad III, the number of households in İskeçe reached 987. According to these data, the population of İskeçe increased approximately threefold from the late XVth century to the late XVIth century. The increase in the population of İskeçe was largely driven by the demand for manpower, which increased with the development of agricultural production, mining activities and related trading in the region.

Agricultural production was developed in the town of İskeçe. Having fertile agricultural lands, cereal crops and especially vine cultivation had a particular place in the economy of the town. Vine cultivation and the must obtained from this cultivation was the product with the highest agricultural income on an annual basis. Besides agricultural production was also engaged in husbandry. Pig raising and sheep and goat farming stood out in the town, where a great majority of the population was non-Muslim. The amount of taxes and duties collected in terms of commercial activities in the town is striking. Trade duties recorded in the register as public order tax, bazaar tax, and cereal measurement indicate the commercial development of the town. The annual revenue collected from İskeçe reached 97977 akces in 1568. Located on the Via Egnatia trade route, İskeçe maintained its feature during the Ottoman period. The town, where agricultural production and husbandry flourished, maintained its development as a trading hub.

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