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Economic Practices during the National Revival – the Commercial Register of Hacı Hristo Rachkov, an Attempt of Micro-Analysis

(Summary)

The article examines, on the basis of a microhistorical analysis of the trade-book of a Bulgarian trader born in Gabrovo in the mid XVIII century, some characteristics of the commercial practices, protoindustrial activities as well as of the use of credit and money circulation in this part of the Ottoman Balkans at the end of the 18th and in the beginning of the XIX century. Special attention is paid to the raw silk trade and production under Hristo Rachkov's control. There is evidence in the source studied that mass decentralized production, exercised as complementary occupation by peasant and urban households in the region, was predominant. Parallel to this, Hristo Rachkov installed silk-reeling mechanisms, operated by salaried workers, in different centers of production. Related to his commercial and protoindustrial activity, Hristo Rachkov was acting also as a moneylender and moneychanger. The records in his trade-book leave no doubt that the use of credit was widespread among all segments of rural and urban society and allow the study of different credit patterns in this part of the Ottoman world. Hr. Rachkov's network of borrowers and lenders included people from different social and professional milieux and from different town and villages. The commercial register illustrates one further aspect of the possibilities of microhistorical analysis. It gives information on the different types of coins in circulation in this part of the Balkans, on their different denominations and on the variations of their value, as well as on the functions assumed by the different currencies.