

# PRZEGLĄD HUMANISTYCZNY

KWARTALNIK • ROK LXVI / 2022 • NR 4 (479)

## W NUMERZE:

R. DETREZ: *The Early Relations between the Ottoman State and the Orthodox Church: An Instance of İstimâlet*

Y. HORB: *Inventing a War. In Search of the Concept of the Last Austro-Turkish War over the Balkans (1788–1791)*

T.J. LIS: *The Attitude of Bosnian Muslims Toward the Ottoman Empire in the Years 1850–1914*

K. RIKEV: *“The First Foretaste of the True East” – A Polish Reporter in Post-Ottoman Ruse*

S. AĞIRBAŞ: *A Study on the Sociocultural Life of the Balkan Peoples as Depicted in Mary Adelaide Walker’s Travel Book Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*

M. PANDEVSKA: *The Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1885) as a Balkan Historical Milestone (A Case Study of Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty)*

M. WALCZAK-MIKOŁAJCZAKOWA: *Turkish Borrowings in Bulgarian Lexis Related to Cuisine and Cooking*

M. REKŚĆ: *Aleksandar Vučić’s Stabilocracy*

PRZEGLĄD  
HUMANISTYCZNY

PISMO UNIwersYTETU warszawskiego

## RADA NAUKOWA

Małgorzata Grzegorzewska, Jan Kieniewicz, Ryszard Kulesza,  
Luigi Marinelli (Rzym), Andrzej Markowski, Józef Porayski-Pomsta,  
Kinga Siatkowska-Callebat (Paryż), Paweł Stępień,  
Dorota Walczak-Delanois (Bruksela), Jerzy Wasilewski,  
Andrzej Waśkiewicz, Elżbieta Wichrowska, Nina Witoszek (Oslo)

# PRZEGLĄD HUMANISTYCZNY

PISMO UNIwersYTETU WARSZAWSKIEGO

---

KWARTALNIK • ROK LXVI / 2022 • NR 4 (479)

---



Warszawa 2022

## REDAKCJA

*Tomasz Wójcik* (redaktor naczelny)  
*Grażyna Szelągowska* (zastępca redaktora naczelnego)  
*Karol Hryniewicz* (sekretarz redakcji)  
*Marta Bucholc, Roman Chymkowski, Lech M. Nijakowski,*  
*Piotr Okniński, Dawid Maria Osiński, Radosław Pawelec, Marcin Poręba,*  
*Elżbieta Wierzbicka-Piotrowska, Jagoda Wierzejska*

## RECENZENCI ZA ROK 2022

Bożena Adamkiewicz-Iglińska (UWM), Igor Borkowski (Uniwersytet SWPS),  
Marcin Całbecki (UG), Marek Dybizbański (UO), Michael Fleischer (Uniwersytet SWPS),  
Beata Frydryczak (UAM), Aleksandra Janowska (UŚ),  
Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk (Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza),  
Magdalena Kreft-Świetlik (UG), Natalia Królikowska-Jedlińska (UW),  
Ewa Majewska (Uniwersytet SWPS), Brygida Pawłowska-Jądrzyk (UKSW),  
Zdzisław Pentek (UAM), Ewa Pogonowska-Bezrąk (UMCS), Krzysztof Popek (UJ),  
Wojciech Sajkowski (UAM), Anna Sobiecka (AP w Słupsku), Alicja Urbanik-Kopeć (IHN PAN),  
Jacek Wojnicki (UW), Joanna Zajkowska (UKSW)

## REDAKCJA NAUKOWA

*Piotr Tafilowski*

Adres redakcji:

02-678 Warszawa, ul. Smyczkowa 5/7  
[www.przegladhumanistyczny.pl](http://www.przegladhumanistyczny.pl)  
e-mail: [przegladhumanistyczny@uw.edu.pl](mailto:przegladhumanistyczny@uw.edu.pl)

Redaktor prowadzący: *Dorota Dziedzic*

Redaktor: *Aleksandra Zych*

ISSN 0033-2194, e-ISSN 2657-599X

© Copyright by Authors, 2022

Czasopismo recenzowane  
Edycja papierowa jest wersją pierwotną pisma

Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego  
02-678 Warszawa, ul. Smyczkowa 5/7  
[wuw@uw.edu.pl](mailto:wuw@uw.edu.pl)  
Dział Handlowy: tel. (48 22) 55-31-333  
e-mail: [dz.handlowy@uw.edu.pl](mailto:dz.handlowy@uw.edu.pl)  
Księgarnia internetowa: [www.wuw.pl](http://www.wuw.pl)

Studio DTP: *Beata Stelęgowska*

Druk i oprawa: POZKAL

## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

Raymond Detrez – The Early Relations between the Ottoman State and the Orthodox Church: An Instance of <i>Istimâlet</i> . . . . .	7
Yevhen Horb – Inventing a War. In Search of the Concept of the Last Austro-Turkish War over the Balkans (1788–1791) . . . . .	24
Tomasz Jacek Lis – The Attitude of Bosnian Muslims Toward the Ottoman Empire in the Years 1850–1914 . . . . .	36
Kamen Rikev – “The First Foretaste of the True East” – A Polish Reporter in Post-Ottoman Ruse . . . . .	51
Seda Ağırbaş – A Study on the Sociocultural Life of the Balkan Peoples as Depicted in Mary Adelaide Walker’s Travel Book <i>Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes</i> . . . . .	59
Maria Pandevska – The Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1885) as a Balkan Historical Milestone (A Case Study of Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty) . . . . .	76
Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa – Turkish Borrowings in Bulgarian Lexis Related to Cuisine and Cooking . . . . .	93
Magdalena Reksć – Aleksandar Vučić’s Stabilocracy . . . . .	102

### REVIEWS AND SURVEYS

Piotr Tafiłowski – To Whom Does Bosnia Belong? . . . . .	121
--	-----



## **The Early Relations between the Ottoman State and the Orthodox Church: An Instance of *Istimâlet***

*Raymond Detrez*

Ghent University, Belgium

e-mail: [Raymond.Detrez@Ugent.be](mailto:Raymond.Detrez@Ugent.be)

ORCID: 0000-0002-8055-9829

### **Abstract**

Shortly after the capture of Constantinople in 1453, Sultan Mehmed II made Gennadios Scholarios the new ecumenical patriarch, defining at the same time the rights and privileges of the Orthodox Church under Ottoman rule. When in the 1530s, some Muslim leaders demanded that the city's remaining churches be closed, Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent refused on the basis of (a travesty of) a legal inquiry. A close reading of Greek and Ottoman sources sheds light on the accommodating policy, called *istimâlet*, which the Ottoman state pursued toward the Orthodox Church.

### **Keywords**

Ottoman Empire, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Gennadios Scholarios, Jeremias I, *istimâlet*

### **Winning over the Christians**

The siege and fall of Constantinople have been described by four contemporary Greek historians: Doukas (c. 1400 – after 1462), George Sphrantzes (1401 – c. 1478), Michael Critobulus (c. 1410 – c. 1470), and Laonikos Chalkokondyles (c. 1430 – c. 1470).<sup>1</sup> Curiously enough, given the importance of the event, only Critobulus,

---

<sup>1</sup> Since there is no established way of transcribing Greek names, especially those from the Byzantine period, which are often Latinized, I have resorted to the transcription used by the translators and researchers of these sources, aware of the inconsistencies.



well informed though not an eyewitness, gives an account of the events related to the enthronization of the first post-Byzantine patriarch Gennadios Scholarios by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. The others obviously had their own reasons for ignoring the event. George Sphrantzes, who faithfully served the last Byzantine emperor Constantine, hated Mehmed and was probably not inclined to give him credit for his gesture.<sup>2</sup> Laonikos Chalkokondyles and Doukas, on the other hand, had supported the reunion of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, which Gennadios Scholarios had successfully opposed, hence their reluctance to pay tribute to him as the new patriarch.

Critobulus was born on Imbros (now Gökçeada in Turkey) and spent almost all his life on the island.<sup>3</sup> In Constantinople, where he received a solid education, he was a fellow student of the future patriarch Gennadios. After the fall of Constantinople, he sent a delegation to Mehmed II to ensure that the islands of Imbros, Lemnos, and Thasos, instead of being annexed to the empire, would be given to a Genoese dynasty as an Ottoman fief. After the sultan finally conquered the islands in 1455–1456, Critobulus became the governor of Imbros. When the Venetians took Imbros in 1466, he left the island for Constantinople. There, he completed his *Hē zoē tou Mōameth B'* (Life of Mehmed II), covering the period from 1451 to 1467 and offering a vivid description of the fall of Constantinople and Mehmed's various campaigns in the Balkans. His biography of the Sultan remained unknown until 1860 when the German theologian Constantin von Tischendorf discovered it in the library of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul and published the accompanying dedicatory letter to Mehmed.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the copy that von Tischendorf brought to light is Critobulus's own manuscript. No other copies of it have been preserved, and it is not mentioned, nor has it left any trace, in later sources.

Given the author's good relations with both Sultan Mehmed and Patriarch Gennadios, Critobulus's account of the enthronization should be read with caution. However, since it is the only contemporary source that we have at our disposal, it remains an obvious starting point for a discussion of the event.

Critobulus writes:

When the Sultan had captured the City of Constantine, almost his very first care was to have the City repopulated. He also undertook the further care and repairs of it. He sent an order in the form of an imperial command to every part of his realm, that as many inhabitants as possible be transferred to the City, not only Christians but also his own people and many of the Hebrews.

<sup>2</sup> For a long time, the *Chronicon maius*, attributed to George Sphrantzes, was cited as the major contemporary source on Gennadios's installation. However, since it has been proven to have been authored by the well-known forger Makarios Melissenos-Melissourgos in Italy c. 1580, the *Chronicon maius* will not be taken into account here.

<sup>3</sup> Diether Roderich Reinsch, "Kritobulos of Imbros – Learned Historian, Ottoman *Raya* and Byzantine Patriot," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta/Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'études byzantines* 40 (2003), 299–301.

<sup>4</sup> Aenoth. Frid. Const. Tischendorf, *Notitia editionis codicis Bibliorum Sinaitici*, Lipsiae: F. A. Brockhaus, 1860, 123–4.

Next he ordered that those parts of the wall which had been destroyed by the cannon should all be strongly rebuilt, and that wherever else they had been damaged by the ravages of time, along the land or along the sea, they should be repaired. He also laid the foundations of the royal palace, choosing, as I said, the finest and best location in the City. He further ordered the construction of a strong fortress near the Golden Gate where there had formerly been an imperial castle, and he commanded that all these things should be done with all haste.

He commanded also that the Roman prisoners should work, and should receive a daily wage of six aspers or more. This was in a way a piece of wise foresight on the part of the Sultan, for it fed the prisoners and enabled them to provide for their own ransom by earning enough to pay their masters thus. Also, when they should become free, they might dwell in the City. Not only this, but it also showed great philanthropy and beneficence, and proved the magnanimity of the Sultan.<sup>5</sup>

Critobulus explicitly points out that Christians participated in restoring and repopulating Constantinople as well, which the Ottoman authors do not mention. Only Ursun beg reports that “prisoners from the surrounding lands of the infidels, subjected by the sword” were transferred to the city.<sup>6</sup> Derviş Ahmed Aşıkpaşazade in his *Menâkıb-ı or Tevârîh-i Âl-i ‘Osmân* (The Deeds or The Chronicle of the House of Osman) refers to the restoration of the city by immigrants but ignores the fact that Mehmed also invited – or forced – Christians to move there. He mentions, however, that Mehmed’s measures were bound to fail because he required the newcomers to pay taxes.<sup>7</sup> He was forced to repeal the taxes but later introduced them again at the suggestion of one of his viziers, the son of an “infidel,” who, in order to secretly keep the city for the Christians, allegedly wanted to discourage Muslims from settling in Constantinople. After renewed protests, the taxes were repealed again.<sup>8</sup>

The tax controversy apparently made a deep impression on Ottoman historians; it is mentioned, for example, by Mehmed Neşri.<sup>9</sup> It shows that Mehmed initially intended to repopulate Constantinople with Turks or Muslims; Christians were a second choice. Moreover, the repeated levying of taxes, despite all protests, suggests that Mehmed needed money. The shortage of cash may have induced him to repopulate the city also with Christians and Jews, who, in addition to being useful as artisans and construction

<sup>5</sup> Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, ed. and trans. Charles T. Riggs, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970, 92, <http://macedonia.kroraia.com/en/kmc/index.htm> [accessed November 11, 2022]; original Greek: *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, ed. Diether Roderich Reinsch, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983, 90. “Roman” here means Byzantine or Greek.

<sup>6</sup> Tursun beg, *Tarih-i ebü'l-feth* [History of the Conqueror], quoted by Friedrich Giese, “Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen für die Stellung der christlichen Untertanen im osmanischen Reich,” *Der Islam. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients* 19 (1) (1931), 271.

<sup>7</sup> [Ahmed Aşıkpaşazade], *Vom Hirtenzelt zur Hohen Pforte. Frühzeit und Aufstieg des Osmanenreiches nach der Chronik „Denkwürdigkeiten und Zeitläufe des Hauses ‘Osman“ vom Derwisch Ahmed, genannt ‘Aşık-Paşa-Sohn*, ed. and trans. Richard F. Kreutel, Graz–Wien–Köln: Verlag Styria, 1959, 200–1.

<sup>8</sup> Giese, “Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen,” 264–77.

<sup>9</sup> Mehmed Neşri, *Ogledalo na sveta. Istorija na osmanskija dvor* [The mirror of the world. A history of the Ottoman court], ed. and trans. Marin Kalicin, Sofija: Otečestven front, 1984, 271–2.

workers, paid significantly more taxes than Muslims. Critobulus points out that Mehmed treated the “Roman prisoners” well in order to keep them in the city.

Given the massacres that occurred during the sacking after the capture of the city and the distrust that the Muslims, judging from Aşıkpaşazade’s account, clearly felt toward Christians, Mehmed might have thought that some “confidence-building measures” would be helpful. According to some historians, the restoration of the Patriarchate was such a measure.<sup>10</sup>

Critobulus continues:

During that period he [Mehmed] called back Gennadius, a very wise and remarkable man. He had already heard much through common report about the wisdom and prudence and virtue of this man. Therefore, immediately after the capture he sought for him, being anxious to see him and to hear some of his wisdom. And after a painstaking search he found him at Adrianople in a village, kept under guard in the home of one of the notables, but enjoying great honors. For his captor knew of his virtue, even though he himself was a military man.

When the Sultan saw him, and had in a short time had proofs of his wisdom and prudence and virtue and also of his power as a speaker and of his religious character, he was greatly impressed with him, and held him in great honor and respect, and gave him the right to come to him at any time, and honored him with liberty and conversation. He enjoyed his various talks with him and his replies, and he loaded him with noble and costly gifts.

In the end, he made him Patriarch and High Priest of the Christians, and gave him among many other rights and privileges the rule of the church and all its power and authority, no less than that enjoyed previously under the emperors. He also granted him the privilege of delivering before him fearlessly and freely many good disquisitions concerning the Christian faith and doctrine. And he himself went to his residence, taking with him the dignitaries and wise men of his court, and thus paid him great honor. And in many other ways he delighted the man.

Thus the Sultan showed that he knew how to respect the true worth of any man, not only of military men but of every class, kings, and tyrants, and emperors. Furthermore the Sultan gave back the church to the Christians, by the will of God, together with a large portion of its properties.<sup>11</sup>

Having decided to re-establish the Patriarchate, Mehmed II evidently chose Gennadios Scholarios as the new patriarch. Gennadios “the Schooled,” born Georgios Kourtesios (c. 1400 – c. 1473), was an extraordinary personality.<sup>12</sup> Although educated in the Palamist and Aristotelian tradition, he had acquired a formidable knowledge of Roman (Catholic) theology, more specifically of Aquinas, whom he sincerely admired. In addition to his scholarly pursuits, he worked as a teacher and served as a senator and a member of the Byzantine supreme court. After the 1437–1438 Council of Ferrara-Florence, in which he participated as a pro-Unionist, he gradually moved toward radical Orthodox positions and, in 1445, became the leader of the anti-Unionist party,

<sup>10</sup> Giese, “Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen,” 264–77.

<sup>11</sup> Kritovoulos, *History*, 93–4; *Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, 90–1.

<sup>12</sup> C. J. G. Turner, “The Career of George-Gennadius Scholarius,” *Byzantion* 39 (1969), 420–55; Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400 – vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’Empire byzantin*, Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 2008.

which earned him enormous popularity among the citizens of Constantinople. In 1446–1447, the Unionist Patriarch Gregory III ousted him from his position and forced him to enter a monastery. As a monk, he remained the driving force behind the anti-Unionist protests. On the eve of the official proclamation of the Union in December 1452, he wrote and distributed several manifestos, attempting to prevent it.

There is little doubt that Gennadios was chosen by the sultan for his anti-Roman stance. In 1453, Gregory III, who had left Constantinople in 1450, intimidated by the anti-Unionist protesters, was still considered by the supporters of the Union as the legitimate patriarch. Moreover, in the 1450s, the threat of an alliance between Catholics and Orthodox was not at all hypothetical. Only ten years before the siege of Constantinople, during the 1443 crusade led by the Polish-Hungarian king Władysław III / Ulászló I, the Orthodox Christians in the Balkans, despite all religious enmity, had supported the advancing Catholic armies. By the time of the 1444 Peace of Szeged, Mehmed's father, Murad II, had been forced to cede most of his possessions in the western Balkans. Mehmed saw fit to perpetuate the Roman-Constantinopolitan rivalry and to win over the Orthodox Christians in his realm. To this end, making the anti-Unionist Gennadios the new patriarch was a shrewd move. Gennadios, who had been held captive in the vicinity of Adrianople, was brought to Constantinople, where a synod ordained him successively deacon, priest, bishop, and finally patriarch.<sup>13</sup>

If Gennadios was chosen as patriarch for his anti-Roman stance, the Patriarchate itself was not restored solely in view of the threat from the Catholic world. After the defeat of the Western powers at the battle of Mohács in 1526, the Patriarchate continued to exist undisturbed. Even more revealing is the fact that after 1453, not only the Armenian Church but even the Jewish community, with which the Catholics were unlikely to ally themselves, were given the same rights and privileges as the Orthodox Christians.<sup>14</sup>

The most important reason why Mehmed II restored the Patriarchate was the traditional Islamic way of dealing with non-Muslim communities, established by the early Arab khalifs in the Near East (or, politically more correctly, Western Asia) and North Africa.<sup>15</sup> According to this tradition, the "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitâb*), Christians and Jews, confessors of a revealed monotheistic religion, were not forcibly converted to Islam but were allowed as *zimmis*, beneficiaries of the *zimma* (from the Arabic *dhim-mah*, "covenant"), to freely profess their faith and live "according to their own law." In exchange, they had to pay a special tax, the *cizye*, and observe a number of restrictions, especially concerning their public visibility. The leaders of the three *millets* or non-Muslim religious communities – Orthodox Christians, Armenian Christians, and Jews – oversaw the relations with the Ottoman authorities and were responsible for

<sup>13</sup> Turner, "The Career," 439.

<sup>14</sup> Gunnar Hering, "Das islamische Recht und die Investitur des Gennadios Scholarios (1454)," *Balkan Studies* 2 (1961), 242–3.

<sup>15</sup> Clifford E. Bosworth, "The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, Vol. 1, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982, 37–51.

peace and order within their communities.<sup>16</sup> The *zimma* is often explained as “protection in exchange for submission.” However, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis’s translation as “discrimination without persecution” is more appropriate.<sup>17</sup> Among the discriminatory measures that Orthodox Christians faced was the confiscation of churches and monasteries. As a rule, the largest and finest churches in the cities were converted into mosques, while smaller churches were left to the Christians.

The *zimma* had been introduced already by the Seljuk Turks in former Byzantine Anatolia from the 11th century onward; it had also been applied by the Ottomans in their expanding empire prior to 1453.<sup>18</sup> Seljuk rulers had occasionally shown tolerance and generosity toward their Christian *zimmis* and had been praised for it in the same way that Critobulus praised Mehmed.<sup>19</sup> From this point of view, Mehmed’s installation of a patriarch and the granting of rights to Orthodox Christians were fully in line with tradition.

However, Mehmed violated Islamic law in two ways. He assigned the status of *zimmi* to the population of a city, Constantinople, which had not surrendered voluntarily but had been taken “with the sword.” Consequently, its citizens could be killed or enslaved – as many of them indeed were – and were not entitled to “protection in exchange for submission.” In addition, he populated the conquered city, henceforth Muslim territory or *dar al-islam*, with “infidels.”<sup>20</sup> Obviously, the interest of the state trumped the Koranic commandments and prohibitions.

Thus, what happened on January 6, 1454, the date on which the enthronization is assumed to have taken place, was above all a pragmatic measure.<sup>21</sup> I have already pointed out why contemporary Greek authors, except for Critobulus, apparently preferred not to mention the event. Contemporary Ottoman historians ignored it as well. For them, it was either the usual settlement of relations between a Muslim ruler and his non-Muslim subjects, which the rest of the Balkans and Anatolia were already familiar

<sup>16</sup> In fact, the religious communities in question were officially called *millets* only from the late 18th century onward and were only effectively institutionalized during the *Tanzimat* (state reforms) period in the 19th century. However, the term “*millet system*” is commonly, though improperly, applied to the way the Ottomans treated their Christian and Jewish subjects starting from 1453 (Benjamin Braude, “Foundation Myths of the *Millet System*,” in *Christians and Jews*, 69–88; Paraskevas Konortas, “From Tâ’ife to Millet. Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community,” in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas, Charles Issawi, Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1999, 169–79).

<sup>17</sup> *Christians and Jews*, 3–6.

<sup>18</sup> Halil İnalcık, “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans,” *Turcica* 21–23 (1991), 415.

<sup>19</sup> Speros Vryonis Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, 210–1.

<sup>20</sup> Giese, “Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen,” 276.

<sup>21</sup> For the date, see Theodore H. Papadopoloulos, *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1990, 2, note 1.

with and which therefore hardly deserved any attention, or a violation of Islamic law which should preferably be passed over in silence.

Critobulus mentions Mehmed's plans to restore the City but does not explicitly link them as a "confidence-building measure" to the restoration of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Although he may have been aware of the pragmatic considerations that motivated the sultan, he ascribes Mehmed's decision entirely to his magnanimity and to the extraordinary intellectual and moral qualities of Gennadios that deeply impressed the sultan. In fact, Critobulus glorifies the patriarch and the Church much more than the sultan. His admiration for the sultan was certainly sincere, but he nevertheless emphasizes the magnificence of the Byzantine Church, inspiring respect even in an all-powerful Ottoman sultan.

Other Greek authors have also set great store by Mehmed's alleged admiration for Greek culture and Christianity. The sultan was indeed interested in history, arts, and religion. There was a Greek scriptorium at his court, and he invited Greek intellectuals, including Patriarch Gennadios, to inform him about the Christian doctrine.<sup>22</sup> Some of them even believed that he and his empire might embrace Christianity. However, Mehmed was and remained a devout Muslim. His interest in Christianity was mainly due to his concern about how to rule an empire that was still overwhelmingly Christian.<sup>23</sup> The interest he displayed might just as well have been another "confidence-building measure" designed to curry favor with Greek intellectuals.

In any case, the restoration of the Patriarchate implied or entailed the re-establishment of the relations of the local bishops and metropolitans with the central authority of the patriarch. We know from Gennadios's own writings that following his enthronization, he was totally preoccupied with the administration of the Church.<sup>24</sup> Critobulus's claim that Mehmed "gave him among many other rights and privileges the rule of the church and all its power and authority, no less than that enjoyed previously under the emperors" is confirmed by the internal doctrinal, judicial, and cultural autonomy that the Patriarchate under Ottoman rule eventually acquired. However, as an autonomous religious institution, the Patriarchate also served the interests of the empire. It was a convenient administrative tool for governing the Christian population and, given the taxes and bribes that patriarchs, metropolitans, and bishops paid upon their appointment, an inexhaustible source of income.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Julian Raby, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983), 15–34.

<sup>23</sup> Franz Babinger, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit*, München: F. Bruckman, 1953, 451.

<sup>24</sup> Adamantios Diamandopoulos, "Gennadios o Scholarios, òs historikē pēgē tōn peri tēn halōsin hronōn [Gennadios Scholarios as a historical source about the years after the capture]," *Hellēnika* 9 (2) (1936), 303.

<sup>25</sup> For this aspect of the Patriarchate, see Tom Papademetriou, *Render unto the Sultan. Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

## Solving a Problem the Ottoman Way

At the beginning of the 16th century, the conquest of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt made Muslims the overwhelming majority of the population of the Ottoman Empire. In 1517, after the capture of Cairo, the sultan assumed the title of khalif, the head of the worldwide community of Muslims. As a result, the Ottoman Empire acquired a more outspoken Islamic character. During the same period, the sultans waged several successful wars in Southeast Europe, culminating in the annexation, after the battle of Mohács in 1526, of nearly all of Hungary.

These developments increased the assertiveness of some members of the *ulema* (Islamic high clergy), who took offense at the many churches still functioning in Constantinople. Mehmed II had turned the Hagia Sofia into a mosque; other churches had been used as warehouses, arsenals, or stables; if damaged irreparably during the sacking, they had been left to fall into ruin. Some churches, however, were still used by the Christians for their divine services.<sup>26</sup> In the 1530s (or maybe already in the 1520s), some members of the *ulema* insisted that all the remaining churches in Constantinople be confiscated, arguing that the city had not surrendered but had been taken “with the sword.” Christians were thus not allowed to own churches. Churches had already been expropriated under Mehmed’s successor, Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512). However, in 1490, when he ordered the expropriation of the Pammakaristos Church, the Church of the All-Blessed Mother of God, which was the patriarchal residence, Patriarch Dionysios (in office 1466–1471 and 1488–1490) succeeded in persuading Bayezid to change his mind, proving that Mehmed II had granted the church to the Patriarchate.<sup>27</sup> Of course, Bayezid may have had his own reasons for doing so, but no matter how omnipotent the sultans were, in some cases, they nevertheless abided by the (Koranic) law or observed the decisions of their predecessors. In the 16th century, however, when the *ulema* demanded the confiscation of the remaining churches in Constantinople, the patriarch was unable to produce any proof of ownership. The charter that had been issued by Mehmed to Gennadios was allegedly lost in a fire.

Many scholars have doubted whether Mehmed did indeed issue such a written document. Critobulus does not mention it. How likely is it that a charter restoring the Ecumenical Patriarchate and affirming its right to exist had been lost and that no one knew about it until the charter had to be presented in court? The Ottomans issued *berats* (*orismoi*, “orders” in Greek) on many occasions. The *berats* relating to the appointment of Patriarch Maximos III and Patriarch Symeon, issued in 1477 and 1483, respectively, have been preserved.<sup>28</sup> It is thus very probable that a charter had indeed been written in

<sup>26</sup> Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, 188.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, 189.

<sup>28</sup> Dimitris G. Apostolopoulos, “Continuity and Change. The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 1. The Survival of a Byzantine Institution,” in *A Companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, ed. Christian Gastgeber et al., Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2021, 103.

1454, granting the rights and privileges of the ecumenical patriarch and his church. In any case, it was eventually lost, which caused a huge problem for the patriarch in 1538, when the *ulema* once again demanded the expropriation of the churches.<sup>29</sup>

The earliest source relating to the event is the *Historia politica et patriarchica Constantinopoleos*, written – or adapted from another source – by Manuel Malaxos in 1578 at the latest.<sup>30</sup> It was included, with a Latin translation, in Martinus Crusius's *Turcograeciae libri octo*.<sup>31</sup> Malaxos apparently relied ultimately on Damascenus Stoudites's *Katalogos chronologikos Oikoumenikôn Patriarchôn tēs Konstantinopoleōs* (Chronological catalogue of the Ecumenical Patriarchs of Constantinople), completed in 1572. Unfortunately, this work, except for a small fragment in Konstantinos Sathas's *Mesaiōnikē bibliothēkē* (Medieval library) concerning another event, has not been published.<sup>32</sup> Although little is known about Malaxos, it is assumed that he belonged to the immediate circle of the patriarch and had access to sources that were eventually lost.<sup>33</sup>

I translate here the entire relevant passage from Malaxos's *Historia politica*:

When Jeremias ascended the patriarchal throne for the second time, there was great perturbation and confusion in the Great Church [the Pammakaristos] and among all the pious, clerics as well as laymen. All the literates and scholars among the Turks had gathered, for they had found in their books written evidence that Constantinople had been conquered with the sword by Sultan Mehmed. They issued a *fetva* [legal ruling] saying that in any city conquered with the sword and not surrendered, no Roman [Byzantine, Orthodox] Church should celebrate the liturgy. There should not even be any churches; they should be pulled down to their foundations. Referring to this *fetva* and convinced that the city had been conquered, they continued to persuade the emperor and all the people that the city had been taken with the sword, as we have said. One day, they threatened to destroy the Great Church and the other churches located in the city, thus carrying out the *fetva* and the order of the emperor.

*Archon* [magnate] Xenakis was a friend of the *kadiasker* [chief judge] of that time. He went to offer his obeisance to him, as he used to do every day so that he would not alienate himself from him despite all submissiveness, and as he was leaving, the *kadiasker* said to him: "You should know that within five days, they will destroy all your churches and the Patriarchate because they have found a *fetva* saying that in a city against which they have waged war and which has been defeated with the sword, absolutely no church should remain or be founded." When Xenakis heard this, his face

<sup>29</sup> In his *History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire* (London 1734, 102–4), Demetrius Cantemir, relying on an unidentified Ottoman historian named Ali Efendi, relates a suspiciously similar case that occurred in 1520 under Patriarch Theoleptus I (in office 1513–1522) and Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520). It is not clear which case is authentic; maybe both happened. However, the 1538 case is more reliably documented, and I will focus on it.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the sources and the relationships between them, see Marios Philippides, Walter K. Hanak, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, 53–6.

<sup>31</sup> Martinus Crusius, *Turcograeciae libri octo*, Basileae: Per Leonardum Ostenium, Sebastiani Henricpetri impensa, 1584. Malaxos's *Historia politica*, with Crusius's Latin translation, was published separately by Immanuel Bekker: [Manuel Malaxos], *Historia politica et patriarchica Constantinopoleos. Epirotica* (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae), Bonn: Impensis E. D. Weberi, 1849.

<sup>32</sup> Konstantinos Sathas, *Mesaiōnikē bibliothēkē*, Vol. 3, Venetia: Typois tou chronou, 1872.

<sup>33</sup> Philippides, Hanak, *The Siege*, 53–4.



changed, he trembled and looked like a dead man. Having made his obeisance to the *kadiasker*, he left him and went, crying bitterly, to the Great Church and the patriarch, but he had no strength to tell him. The patriarch asked him: "Why this sorrow and why these tears?" After some time, the *archon* told him: "There is a *fetva* and an order issued by the emperor that since the city has been conquered with the sword through war, all the churches of the Christians in it must be destroyed." When the patriarch heard this, a great fear and trembling came over him, and sweat poured from his face like rain from heaven to earth. Immediately he left his cell and ordered the church to be opened. Standing in front of the icon of the Pammakaristos and crying, he sang a prayer and kissed the Pammakaristos. Then he left the church, mounted his mule, and, together with *archon* Xenakis, rode to the pasha. The patriarch had access to him because the pasha loved him very much. He was Toulphi pasha [Lütfi pasha], the grand vizier. The pasha advised him to come to the *divan* [state council] and explain that in the beginning, when Sultan Mehmed besieged the city, there was fighting and many walls were destroyed, that Emperor Constantine then came out, carrying the keys of the city, that he offered his obeisance to the sultan and gave him the keys, and that the sultan kindly received him and his *archons* and all the people. When the patriarch heard the pasha's words, he found some consolation in them. On the same day, he hurried to visit the notables of the court and other people, and he honored them according to their position.

In the morning, the horrifying *divan* gathered so that everything would be heard in the entire city. Turks, Romans [Orthodox Christians, Greeks], Armenians, Jews, and all other nations flocked together. There was such a crowd that people stood outside as far as the Hagia Sofia to learn the emperor's decision. The patriarch entered the *divan* and offered his obeisance. He stood before the pashas, looked at them, and was impressed by their glory and their boldness. Sweat poured profusely from his face and soaked his cassock and all his clothes like those of Christ during the Passion. With him was the most glorious *archon* Demetrios Kantakouzinis and *archon* Xenakis. The pasha said to him: "Patriarch! A *fetva* and an order of the emperor have been issued that you, Romans, should not have any Roman churches, neither here in the city nor in any other of the emperor's cities taken with the sword by his ancestors, the other emperors. Tell your priests, if you have in your churches any clothes that you wear according to your rank, books, and whatnot, to take them and to close your churches so that we may turn them into what the *fetva* and the order of the emperor command."

The patriarch answered the pasha, speaking in a shrill voice: "My lord, for the churches outside the city, for those in the other cities, I am not responsible. As for those within the city, I can say that when Sultan Mehmed came and waged war on this city, Emperor Constantine Palaeologus, the *archons* and the people made their obeisance to him and voluntarily surrendered the city." After the patriarch had said these words, the pasha answered: "These words that you speak, do you have any Muslim witnesses who were in the army of Sultan Mehmed when he came and captured the city so that we can learn whether it was conquered or surrendered?" The patriarch answered: "I have, my lord." The pasha said to the patriarch: "Come tomorrow to the *divan*, I will be the emperor's mediator, and whatever he decides shall be done."

The patriarch and his escort left the pasha, followed by the entire crowd of Christians. Together they entered the Great Church, and all said with one voice: "We are prepared not only to give gold coins to free our churches but also to die, together with our children." When the patriarch heard these words from the people, he was very thankful, blessed them, and then went up to his holy cell.

In the morning, the clerics and the *archons* came, took the patriarch, and went to the *divan*, followed by all the Christians, clerics, and laymen of the city and of Galata [the district on the northern shore of the Golden Horn]. The patriarch, the clerics, and the *archons* entered the *divan* and stood again before the pashas. Then Toulphi pasha, the grand vizier, said: "Patriarch, I have come here to the *divan* of the emperor, I have become the mediator. He has ordered you to bring those Muslim

witnesses you said you have so that we can ask them what they know. And when we have heard them, I will become the mediator again, and whatever the emperor decides shall be done.” The patriarch answered, saying to the vizier: “My lord, my witnesses are not here but in Adrianople; I ask for a twenty days’ delay so that I can send someone to bring them here.” When the pasha heard this, he granted him the delay. The patriarch offered him his obeisance, left the *divan* with his escort, and went to the Great Church. Immediately, he sent the most skillful envoys. They traveled to Adrianople with many gifts and presents, found the Muslims they were looking for, and brought them [to Constantinople]. They spoke to them and gave them the presents, as they wished. Then they mounted their horses and, together with the envoys, went to the patriarch in the Great Church. The patriarch came down to the courtyard, embraced them, and welcomed them with great love. Immediately, he offered them a seat. They sat down, and he brought them all kinds of food and clothing. On the second day, when they had rested, he took them to the pasha. The pasha, because of the love he felt for the patriarch, received them. They persuaded them to testify as the patriarch had told them and assured them to have no fear. The patriarch and the witnesses left the pasha and returned to the patriarchate.

The next day, the patriarch took them to the imperial *divan*. He appeared before the pashas and made his obeisance. According to the rules of the house, he left the witnesses outside. When the pasha saw him, he said: “Patriarch, the twenty days’ delay you requested to bring the witnesses has expired. What do you say now? Be careful not to lie to the emperor, for you will suffer great anger, punishment, and condemnation.” The patriarch answered the pasha, saying: “My lord, after the delay, I have brought my witnesses. I do not lie to the emperor nor to your highness.” The pasha said: “And where are they?” The patriarch said: “They are waiting outside the *divan* with my monks.” When the pasha heard this, he immediately sent a *chaush* [guard]. The *chaush* ran to bring the witnesses before the pashas. When they saw them, they were astonished by their old age. Their beards were as white as pure snow. From their eyes, tears were flowing, they were red like raw flesh, and their hands and legs trembled from old age. The pasha asked one of them: “What is your name?” He answered: “Mustafa.” “What did they call your father?” “Junus.” He said to the other, the second one: “What is your name?” He answered: “Piri.” “And your father, what was his name?” And he said: “Rustem.” Then he said to them: “How many years ago did Sultan Mehmed conquer Constantinople?” They answered: “Eighty-four years ago.” He said again: “And you, how old were you then?” They said: “Both of us were eighteen.” Again, he said to them: “How old are you today?” They answered: “Hundred and two.” When the grand vizier and the other pashas heard this, they were amazed and shuddered. Again, they asked them: “What function did you have at that time in the sultan’s army?” They answered: “*Nopetzides* [Turkish *nöbetçi*, “guardians”], that means Janissaries.” In Frankish, they say *souldadi*. Again, they said: “How did the sultan take this city, by war or after it surrendered?” They told the pasha that it had surrendered. “Listen, my lord, how it happened, and learn about the matter in detail.”

“When we came here with the sultan and his army, we set up our tents outside the city and settled down. We did not start fighting until the armada, the galleys, arrived from the Black Sea. When they arrived, the sultan informed the emperor of the Romans that if he surrendered the city voluntarily, he could make him his brother, and both could be rulers and emperors. The emperor had to surrender it if he wanted to keep his country mansions and cities and other revenues and live in prosperity together with his *archons*. Neither the emperor nor the *archons* accepted the sultan’s proposal. Full of anger, the latter ordered without delay to start the fighting – the galleys from the sea and we from the mainland. The world became dark due to the cannons and the muskets and the masses of people. The day looked like night. Many great men from the sultan’s army perished in the war – the *beylerbey* of Rumelia, that means the West [the Balkans], agas, flag-bearers, *sipahis* [horsemen], and many others. We caused great trouble to the Romans with our cannons, muskets, and arrows and partly destroyed the city walls and houses.

When the emperor of the Romans saw how many of his men had perished, he feared that they [the Ottomans] would take the city and decapitate his men. He sent *archons* of his palace as envoys to our sultan. In the name of their emperor, they offered their obeisance to him in order to establish friendly relations and to surrender the city to him. [They begged him] to give the emperor's *archons* their manor houses and not to threaten, rob, and maltreat the people, but to leave them peacefully in their houses, without any *corvée* or other heavy tasks. The sultan listened to the words that the envoys said in the name of the emperor. He received them very well, with great joy, and gave them a written charter, saying: 'I, Emperor Sultan Mehmed, by this written charter, declare to the emperor of the city Constantine Palaeologus and his *archons* that I allow them to live in their own way, to have [all that is necessary] to live in prosperity as *archons*, to have all conveniences and their male and female serfs. I want the rest of the people to be free of all *corvées* and other heavy tasks. Never will I take children as Janissaries, neither I nor the inheritors of my empire. Let this charter be steadfast and enduring.' The sultan personally handed this charter to the envoys to pass it on to Emperor Constantine. After they had offered their obeisance, they went to the emperor and gave him the charter. When the emperor saw the sultan's charter, he rejoiced greatly and immediately took the keys of the city and went, with his *archons* and the people, to the sultan's tent and gave him the keys in his hands. The sultan embraced the emperor, kissed him, and seated him on his right side. He ordered festivities to be held for three days and three nights. Then the emperor took the sultan with him; they entered the city, and he surrendered it to him."

When the pasha had heard all this from the witnesses, he went to the sultan and, as a mediator passing on everything, he told him about their age and longevity. When the sultan heard all this, he was very amazed and without delay issued a charter to the patriarch that the churches would be neither threatened nor embarrassed as long as the World existed.

When the patriarch had taken the charter, he went to the patriarchate with the entire people of the Christians and put the charter in the sacristy. On that day, in great devoutness, we sent litanies and thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the All-Blessed, the All-Glorious Holy Mother of God, the hope and anchor of pious and orthodox Christians.<sup>34</sup>

The event referred to in the *Historia politica* can be dated between July 1539 and April 1541, when Lütfi pasha, called Toulphi pasha in the text, was the grand vizier of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Patriarch Jeremias's second patriarchate (*ton deuterou patriarchikon thronon*) lasted from 1525 to 1546.

The story is intriguing in many ways. Compared to the friendly relations between Patriarch Gennadios and Sultan Mehmed described by Critobulus, the submissive attitude of Patriarch Jeremias toward Sultan Süleyman is striking. While Mehmed frequented the patriarchal residence and conversed with the patriarch, Süleyman is absent, conveying his unlimited power through his mediator, the grand vizier, and the *divan*.

Surprisingly, it is grand vizier Lütfi pasha, the second most powerful man in the empire, the sultan's confidant and his representative in the *divan*, who advises the patriarch to bribe some elderly Turks and make them commit perjury by claiming that Constantinople had been surrendered. The same Lütfi pasha is the author of a history of the Ottomans, in which he explicitly states that Constantinople was not surrendered but taken by storm!<sup>35</sup> The grand vizier's friendship with the patriarch, emphasized twice

<sup>34</sup> [Manuel Malaxos], *Historia politica*, 158–69. Additions in square brackets are mine.

<sup>35</sup> Giese, "Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen," 276.

in the text, could be explained by his Christian background – he was an Albanian from Vlorë, recruited through *devşirme* (child levy).<sup>36</sup> Jeremias I was born in Zitsa in Epirus, which at that time had a dense Albanian population. However, it is impossible that Lütü pasha would have acted on his own, without the sultan's knowledge. Süleyman's evidently smooth acceptance of the unlikely testimony of the former Janissaries suggests that he and the grand vizier concocted together a way out of the embarrassing situation in which the *ulema* had put them.

The witnesses' story about Emperor Constantine's voluntary surrender of Constantinople to the Ottoman sultan is also mentioned in a *fetva* issued by the famous Ebussuûd Efendi, *kadi* (judge) from 1533 to 1537 and *şeyh ül-islam* (grand mufti) from 1545 to 1574:

Question: Did the immortal Sultan Mehmed conquer Constantinople and the adjacent villages waging war?

Answer: As far as is known, waging war. However, the fact that the churches were left intact indicates that the city had been taken in a peaceful way. In 945 [of the Hijra, May 30, 1538 – May 18, 1539], the question was investigated. They found two men, one being 130 years old, the other 117, who told the investigators: "The Jews and the Christians secretly agreed with Sultan Mehmed that they would not help the Byzantine emperor; therefore, the sultan would leave them as they were and not enslave them. In this way, the capture took place." On the basis of this testimony, the old churches were left intact.<sup>37</sup>

The false testimony of two bribed old men, who certainly lied about their age too, can hardly be considered a historical source. However, Steven Runciman thinks that "it would have been perfectly possible" that some quarters in Constantinople (Petrion, Phanar) surrendered to the local Turkish assailants as soon as the city walls had been breached. Consequently, they were protected by Mehmed's military police against looting and were allowed to keep their churches.<sup>38</sup> If some quarters of Constantinople had indeed surrendered in this way, that fact was clearly forgotten by 1538 since the witnesses tell a different story. In any case, what is relevant here is the readiness of Sultan Süleyman, his grand vizier Lütü pasha, and *şeyh ül-islam* Ebussuûd Efendi to feign belief in two men of an improbable age who claimed that Constantine had voluntarily surrendered his capital, contrary to what all Ottoman historians, including Lütü pasha himself, were convinced of. Moreover, it was not an accident that Sultan Mehmed was called *Fatih*, the Conqueror.

Most likely, the sultan and his advisers wanted to avoid a confrontation with the city's Christian population. The claim that the city had surrendered served as

<sup>36</sup> Mehmet İpşirli, "Lütü Paşa," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 7, Eskişehir: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1997, 96–101, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/lutfi-pasa> [accessed November 11, 2022].

<sup>37</sup> Johannes Heinrich Mordtmann, "Die Kapitulation von Konstantinopel im Jahre 1453," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 21 (1912), 136.

<sup>38</sup> Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, 202–3.

a justification for the survival of the churches, which was in fact a violation of Koranic law. Ebussuûd Efendi is known for his creative adapting of the Holy Law to the interest of the state. In general, the Ottomans preferred to keep things as they were and “follow time-honored patterns in administration.”<sup>39</sup> At first glance, it may seem that the patriarch came out on the winning end. However, most of the Constantinopolitan churches were eventually expropriated and turned into mosques, not all at once but surreptitiously, one by one, without provoking any upheaval. The Pammakaristos Church was turned into the *Fethiye* Mosque in 1591, under Sultan Murad III.

### *Istimâlet*

The enthronization of Gennadios in 1454 was not a generous gesture, as Critobulus would have us believe, but was intended to make the Christians who were needed for the restoration of the city feel safe in Constantinople and to reconcile them to the prospect of living under Ottoman rule. For the Muslims, the re-establishment of the Patriarchate might have seemed in keeping with the Islamic tradition of *zimma*, but it was a violation of Koranic law. Critobulus claims that the sultan was deeply impressed by Gennadios’s personality; however, in Mehmed’s eyes, Gennadios was in fact primarily a tool to deepen the rift between Orthodox Christians and Catholics. Nothing was really what it seemed, but as long as all parties involved kept up appearances, they could live with the existing situation.

In 1538, the Ottoman *ulema* insisted that the authorities confiscate the remaining churches, arguing that since Constantinople had been taken “with the sword,” Christians were not entitled to own churches. For some reason, probably to avoid problems with the Christian population of Constantinople, Sultan Süleyman preferred not to give in to the *ulema*’s demands. Ostensibly complying with Islamic law, he pretended to believe two decrepit greybeards who claimed that, contrary to everything contemporary Ottoman historians had written on the subject, Constantine had surrendered the city to Mehmed. The churches in Constantinople turned out to be perfectly legitimate and were saved, at least for the time being.

Gunnar Hering calls this event “eine Komödie.”<sup>40</sup> However, both the enthronization of Gennadios and the sham use of fake witnesses can also be seen as examples of a policy that allowed the Ottomans to maintain their position of power vis-à-vis a non-Muslim population by accommodating it and giving in on issues of minor importance, while at the same time ensuring that they did not antagonize Muslims by “creatively” interpreting and applying Islamic law.

<sup>39</sup> George Georgiades Arnakis, “The Greek Church of Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire,” *The Journal of Modern History* 24 (3) (1952), 235.

<sup>40</sup> Hering, “Das islamische Recht,” 255.

The Turkish historian Halil İnalcık defined this policy as *istimâlet*:

[I]n the early period of their expansion, the Ottomans pursued, primarily in order to facilitate conquest, or to make the indigenous population favorably disposed, a policy called *istimâlet*. It was intended to win over the population, peasants and townspeople, as well as military and clerics, by generous promises and concessions, sometimes going beyond the limits of the well-known, tolerant stipulations of Islamic Law concerning non-Muslims who had submitted without resistance.<sup>41</sup>

However, *istimâlet* should not be idealized as a token of tolerance; it was, just like the use of violence, a tool allowing the state machine to operate smoothly. *Istimâlet*, together with coercion, has been appropriately compared to “the carrot and the stick.”<sup>42</sup> Both were used by the sultan at his sole discretion.

## References

- [Ahmed Aşıkpaşazade], *Vom Hirtenzelt zur Hohen Pforte. Frühzeit und Aufstieg des Osmanenreiches nach der Chronik „Denkwürdigkeiten und Zeitläufte des Hauses ‘Osman‘ vom Derwisch Ahmed, genannt ‘Aşık-Paşa-Sohn*, ed. and trans. Richard F. Kreutel, Graz–Wien–Köln: Verlag Styria, 1959.
- Apostolopoulos Dimitris G., “Continuity and Change. The Patriarchate in the Early Ottoman Period 1. The Survival of a Byzantine Institution,” in *A Companion to the Patriarchate of Constantinople*, ed. Christian Gastgeber et al., Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2021, 103–17.
- Arnakis George Georgiades, “The Greek Church of Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire,” *The Journal of Modern History* 24 (3) (1952), 235–50.
- Babinger Franz, *Mehmed der Eroberer und seine Zeit*, München: F. Bruckman, 1953.
- Blanchet Marie-Hélène, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400 – vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’Empire byzantin*, Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 2008.
- Bosworth Clifford E., “The Concept of Dhimma in Early Islam,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, Vol. 1, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982, 37–51.
- Braude Benjamin, “Foundation Myths of the Millet System,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, Vol. 1, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982, 69–88.
- Cantemir Demetrius, *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire, Containing the Growth of the Othman Empire from the Reign of Othman the Founder to the Reign of Mahomet IV. That is, from the Year 1300, to the Siege of Vienna, in 1683. Written Originally in Latin by Demetrius Cantemir, Late Prince of Moldavia. Translated into English, from the Author’s own Manuscript, by N. Tindal, M. A., Vicar of Great Waltham in Essex. Adorn’d with the Heads of the*

<sup>41</sup> İnalcık, “The Status,” 409.

<sup>42</sup> Elias Kolovos, “İstimalet: What Do We Actually Know about It?” in *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marinos Sariyannis, Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2019, 59–70.

- Turkish Emperors, Ingraven from Copies taken from Originals in the Great Seignor's Palace, by the Late Sultan's Painter*, London: Printed for James, John and Paul Knapton, at the Crown in Lutgate Street, 1734.
- Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. *The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, Vol. 1, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982.
- Kritobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, ed. Diether Roderich Reinsch, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983.
- Crusius Martinus, *Turcograeciae libri octo à Martino Crusio, in Academia Tubingensi Graeco et Latino Professore, utraque lingua edita. Quibus Graecorum status sub imperio Turcico, in politica & ecclesia, oeconomia & scholis, iam inde ab amissa Constantinopoli, ad hæc usq[ue] tempora, luculenter describitur: cum indice copiosissimo*, Basileae: Per Leonardvm Ostenivm, Sebastiani Henricpetri impensa, 1584.
- Diamandopoulos Adamantios, "Gennadios o Scholarios, ōs historikē pēgē tōn peri tēn halōsin hronōn [Gennadios Scholarios as a historical source about the years after the capture]," *Hellēnika* 9 (2) (1936), 285–308.
- Giese Friedrich, "Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen für die Stellung der christlichen Untertanen im osmanischen Reich," *Der Islam. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients* 19 (1) (1931), 264–77.
- Hering Gunnar, "Das islamische Recht und die Investitur des Gennadios Scholarios (1454)," *Balkan Studies* 2 (1961), 231–56.
- İnalçık Halil, "The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans," *Turcica* 21–23 (1991), 407–35.
- İpşirli Mehmet, "Lütfi Paşa," in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 7, Eskişehir: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1997, 96–101, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/lutfi-pasa> [accessed November 11, 2022].
- Kolovos Elias, "İstimalet: What Do We Actually Know about It?" in *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marinos Sariyannis, Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2019, 59–70.
- Konortas Paraskevas, "From Tâ'ife to Millet. Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community," in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas, Charles Issawi, Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1999, 169–79.
- Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, ed. and trans. Charles T. Riggs, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970, <http://macedonia.kroraina.com/en/kmc/index.htm> [accessed November 11, 2022].
- [Malaxos Manuel], *Historia politica et patriarchica Constantinopoleos. Epirotica* (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae), ed. Immanuel Bekker, Bonnae: Impensis E. D. Weberi, 1849.
- Mordtmann Johannes Heinrich, "Die Kapitulation von Konstantinopel im Jahre 1453," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 21 (1912), 129–44.
- Nešri Mehmed, *Ogledalo na sveta. Istorija na osmanskija dvor* [The mirror of the world. A history of the Ottoman court], ed. and trans. Marin Kalicin, Sofija: Otečestven front, 1984.
- Papademetriou Tom, *Render unto the Sultan. Power, Authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the Early Ottoman Centuries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Papadopolopoulos Theodore H., *Studies and Documents Relating to the History of the Greek Church and People under Turkish Domination*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1990.
- Philippides Marios, Hanak Walter K., *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.
- Raby Julian, "Mehmed the Conqueror's Greek Scriptorium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983), 15–34.
- Reinsch Diether Roderich, "Kritobulos of Imbros – Learned Historian, Ottoman Raya and Byzantine Patriot," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta/Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'études byzantines* 40 (2003), 297–311.

- Runciman Steven, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Runciman Steven, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Sathas Konstantinos, *Mesaiōnikē bibliothēkē*, Vol. 3, Venetia: Typois tou chronou, 1872.
- Tischendorf Aenoth. Frid. Const., *Notitia editionis codicis Bibliorum Sinaitici*, Lipsiae: F. A. Brockhaus, 1860.
- Turner C. J. G., "The Career of George-Gennadius Scholarius," *Byzantion* 39 (1969), 420–55.
- Vryonis Jr. Speros, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.



## **Inventing a War. In Search of the Concept of the Last Austro-Turkish War over the Balkans (1788–1791)**

*Yevhen Horb*

Institute for Human Sciences, Austria/

Center for Urban History, Ukraine

e-mail: [eshorb14@gmail.com](mailto:eshorb14@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0002-9782-9194

### **Abstract**

The Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 was one of the failed attempts by the Austrians to “reconquer” the Balkans. Probably for this reason, this military conflict is still awaiting a monographic interpretation both in American/European and Turkish historiography. For two centuries now, historians have been searching for the concept of the last Austro-Turkish War over the Balkans, and the present article is one of the first attempts to characterize the problems researchers face when they take up this issue. The article also outlines promising directions for further studies.

### **Keywords**

Austro-Turkish War (1788–1791), Dubica war, Military Frontier, Eurocentrism, historiography, historical geography

### **Introduction**

The last Austro-Turkish War represents a major gap in modern military historiography. This fact could be explained by the decline of traditional military historical studies and their shift to the field of the so-called “new military history.” However, as will be shown below, this has not been the case. Active interpretation

of the problems of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 slowed down around the middle of the 20th century; afterward, only a few separate research theses emerged. This indicates a crisis in the problem's conceptualization rather than a loss of interest in the issue. The aforementioned crisis, in turn, stems from the crisis in the search for new sources and in the interpretation of those that are already known.

The Austro-Turkish confrontation in the late 18th century erupted when the whole world turned its attention to France. It was, after all, the time of the French Revolution and the resulting wars. We believe that the historiography of all the conflicts that took place prior to the fall of Napoleon suffers, in one way or another, from Francocentrism. Since the Holy Roman Empire's last war against the Ottomans started at the beginning of the aforementioned period of revolutionary wars, the Austro-Turkish War appears to be in the "historiographical shadow," i.e., on the margins of military historiography. This research field consists of a series of almost clichéd studies that follow the same pattern, duplicating each other, and are dependent on the factually rich overviews of the hostilities carried out by the imperial army in all theaters of war published in the 19th century by German historians. All serious studies on the subject took those overviews into account. The researchers drew not only facts from them but also the very pattern of presenting and assessing the events.

If the history of the European wars in the late 18th and early 19th centuries can be characterized as Francocentric, the history of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 can be described as Austrocentric. The same is true of most of the studies concerned with the problems of military and political conflicts between the East and the West written by European and American historians. The present article is an attempt to revise this tradition of Austrocentrism and proposes new directions of research that would "revive" the military historical studies of the last Austro-Turkish War. To achieve this goal, we need to address the issue of the terminology, analyze the current state of knowledge in this field and its source base, as well as identify new and promising lines of research. It is noteworthy that the article is not an overview of historiography and sources in the traditional sense but rather an attempt – although not the first one – to introduce the reader to this topic.

Already in 1983, the *Austrian History Yearbook* published an article by Paul P. Bernard, a researcher of the Joseph II era, which, judging by its title, qualifies as an attempt to conceptualize the problems of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791.<sup>1</sup> Bernard himself favored the works of Karl A. Roider Jr., describing them as the very first reliable studies of the eastern policy pursued by Joseph II and of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 in particular. We will refer to Roider's work at a later point. As for Bernard's article, ambitiously subtitled "Some Further Thoughts," it was another overly generalized and selective overview of the history of the last Austro-Turkish War, which did not go beyond summarizing the recent (at that time) literature on the topic.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul P. Bernard, "Austria's Last Turkish War. Some Further Thoughts," *Austrian History Yearbook* 19 (1) (1983), 15–31.

The American historian also outlined a number of aspects of the history of the war that required further research. Thus, Bernard's overview was not much more than a kind of guide to help familiarize oneself with the subject.

## The Problem of Definition

Discussions about the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 begin already at the definition stage since the name of the interstate conflict we used at the beginning of the article is not universally recognized. A good example of this is the variation in how this conflict is called in different language versions of Wikipedia, the popular online encyclopedia, which, no matter whether we like it or not, is for many people the first step in learning about any topic. Those wishing to obtain a more or less unbiased understanding of the course of the Austro-Turkish confrontation of the late 18th century can refer to the German or Turkish Wikipedia articles as well as the better-known English one. All three provide three different names and dates of the conflict: the Russo-Austro-Turkish War of 1787–1792 (the German version),<sup>2</sup> the Ottoman-Austrian War of 1787–1791 (the Turkish version),<sup>3</sup> and the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 (the English version).<sup>4</sup>

The problem that immediately arises concerns determining the timeframe of the war and the advisability of considering the Russo-Turkish and the Austro-Turkish conflicts as a single conflict. On the one hand, the answer to this question is obvious: the Russian Empire and the Holy Roman Empire were allies in the war against the Ottomans; thus, these two conflicts can be considered one war. However, in the course of the confrontation, the allies could not agree about the expected results of the war and began separate negotiations with the enemy; as a result, the Holy Roman Empire ended the war a few months earlier than Russia, which was still actively engaged in hostilities. Moreover, Emperor Joseph II started the war against the Ottomans in February 1788, later than the Russians did; thus, we are dealing with two separate military conflicts. The designation “Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791” appears more appropriate in the light of the research presented here. However, let us emphasize again that it is not universally recognized. The use of alternative names, such as “the Habsburg-Ottoman War,” does not seem justifiable to us, as it is an example of the outdated dynastic

---

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, *Russisch-Österreichischer Türkenkrieg (1787–1792)*, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russisch-%C3%96sterreichischer\\_T%C3%BCrkenkrieg\\_\(1787%E2%80%931792\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russisch-%C3%96sterreichischer_T%C3%BCrkenkrieg_(1787%E2%80%931792)) [accessed June 27, 2022].

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia, *1787–1791 Osmanlı-Avusturya Savaşı*, [https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/1787-1791\\_Osmanlı%C4%B1-Avusturya\\_Sava%C5%9F%C4%B1](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/1787-1791_Osmanlı%C4%B1-Avusturya_Sava%C5%9F%C4%B1) [accessed June 27, 2022].

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, *Austro-Turkish War (1788–1791)*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Turkish\\_War\\_\(1788%E2%80%931791\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Turkish_War_(1788%E2%80%931791)) [accessed June 27, 2022].

approach to historiography. The chaos in the definitions present in the popular online encyclopedia reflects the corresponding chaos in the scientific literature on the subject.

The most widespread definition in modern historical science calls the war of 1788–1791 “the last Turkish war,” which is a term suggested by Austrian researchers, particularly by the already-mentioned Karl A. Roeder Jr.<sup>5</sup> This approach is the result of the “monopolization” of the conflict in national historiography. The name “the last Turkish war” suggests that we are only talking about the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 since it was indeed the last war for Austria, as opposed to Russia, which experienced four more wars with the Ottoman Empire (not counting the events on the Caucasian frontline during World War I). At the same time, Russian historiography, both modern and of the imperial era, considers the hostilities between the imperial army and the Ottomans in the Balkans as part of the Russo-Turkish War of 1787–1792. Shortly after its conclusion, it was called “Catherine the Great’s second Turkish war,” which was an early example of the “monopolization” of the war by national historiography.<sup>6</sup>

Not so widespread, though no less illustrative, example of such a “monopolization” is the term “Dubica war” used by Croatian and Bosnian scholars in reference to the events of 1788–1792. This designation is associated with the Austro-Turkish fighting for the fortress of Dubica (now Kozarska Dubica in Bosnia and Herzegovina), which took place mainly in 1788. These fierce battles were only an episode in the three-year war. Nevertheless, historians in some Balkan countries applied the name “Dubica war” to the entire war of 1788–1791,<sup>7</sup> although this approach has been limited to their local historiographies.

### The State of Research and Historiographical Clichés

In this article, we will not analyze in detail the entire historiography of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791, as this subject requires a separate study. However, it is worth mentioning a few works that have become milestones in expanding our knowledge of the Holy Roman Empire’s last Turkish war. They are not very numerous.

Oskar Criste, an Austrian military historian from the early 20th century, was one of the first scholars to propose a comprehensive overview of the campaign conducted by the troops of the Holy Roman Empire in the Balkans between 1788 and 1791.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Karl A. Roeder Jr., *Austria’s Eastern Question, 1700–1790*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, 169.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the two-volume monograph by Russian military historian Andrey Petrov, on which the subsequent Russian historiography of the issue relies: Andrey Petrov, *Vtoraâ tureckââ vojna v carstvoyevanie imperatricy Ekateriny II 1787–1791 g.*, Vols. 1–2, Sankt-Peterburg: Tipografiâ N. Golike, 1880.

<sup>7</sup> It is used nowadays, too. See, for example, Elma Korić, “Bosansko pograničje u vrijeme Dubičkog rata 1788–1791,” *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 65 (2016), 213–37.

<sup>8</sup> Oskar Criste, *Kriege unter Kaiser Josef II*, Wien: L.W. Seidel, 1904.

His work was a kind of general summary of the documents published in the late 19th century in the Austrian chronicle *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* on the basis of materials from Viennese archives. However, Criste still followed the pattern of analyzing the course of the war according to the territorial principle, i.e., in relation to particular army corps, such as the Croatian or Slavonian army corps, the Main Army, etc. This approach was used by the press of the late 18th century, which informed its readers of the successes of the Austrian army on the Turkish front, as well as by the first compilers who declared that they were creating an “unbiased” history of the Turkish War fought by Joseph II.

In addition to Criste’s contribution, it is impossible not to mention the earlier work of Franz Vaniček, who specialized in the history of the so-called Military Frontier. When presenting the events of the Austro-Turkish War, he devoted much attention to analyzing the participation of the border troops of the imperial army in the conflict.<sup>9</sup> Despite being rich in facts and drawing on materials from the Viennese archives, Criste’s and Vaniček’s works have one major flaw, characteristic of all European and American historiography: the Ottoman side is deprived of its “voice.” In the publications of many scholars, there are only “faceless” Ottomans, with no information given about their numbers, organization, or names of commanders. We will consider this peculiarity in more detail when talking about the problem of the focus of the studies concerned with the last Austro-Turkish War.

Another important step in studying the problem from the perspective of the analysis of hostilities was a series of articles by Hungarian researcher István Rédvay, published on the eve of and during World War II.<sup>10</sup> Rédvay’s studies provided an overview of the 1778 military campaign in accordance with the territorial principle. The historian based his research on documents from Austrian and Hungarian archives and paid special attention to Hungarian participation in the war. In our opinion, Rédvay’s works are the most significant and, at the same time, underestimated contribution to the topic of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791. Today, he is hardly mentioned even by the experts in this field. It seems that his studies, published between 1939 and 1943, became “victims” of World War II.

The most recent overviews of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 include works by Karl A. Roider Jr.,<sup>11</sup> Matthew Z. Mayer,<sup>12</sup> and the no less important publication by

<sup>9</sup> Franz Vaniček, *Specialgeschichte der Militärgrenze. Aus Originalquellen und Quellenwerken geschöpft*, Vol. 3, Wien: Aus der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1875.

<sup>10</sup> István Rédvay, “Az erdélyi szorosok védelme 1788-ban,” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 40 (1) (1939), 229–57; idem, “II. József török háborúja (1788–1790). (Első közlemény),” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 43 (1) (1942), 1–28; idem, “II. József török háborúja (1788–1790). (Második közlemény),” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 43 (1) (1942), 179–200; idem, “II. József török háborúja (1788–1790). (Harmadik közlemény),” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 44 (1–2) (1943), 1–34.

<sup>11</sup> Roider Jr., *Austria’s Eastern Question*, 169–88.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Z. Mayer, *Joseph II and the Campaign of 1788 against the Ottoman Turks*, Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 2000; idem, *Joseph II and the Austro-Ottoman War, 1788–1791*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Michael Hochedlinger.<sup>13</sup> The first two historians present the events (mainly those on the diplomatic front) through the prism of actions carried out by certain personalities of the Austrian political scene of the late 18th century, such as Wenzel Anton, Prince of Kaunitz-Rietberg, and Emperor Joseph II. Hochedlinger's synthesis, on the other hand, also includes a general overview of the scientific literature on the topic, which, however, omits much of the historiographical contribution of the 19th–20th centuries.<sup>14</sup> All three authors simplify the events considerably and pay too much attention to the diplomatic vicissitudes of the Austro-Turkish War. Again, the Ottoman side is “deprived of its voice,” which is characteristic of European historiography in general. Paul P. Bernard tried to draw attention to this already in the 1980s, writing about “the silence of the Balkans.”<sup>15</sup> However, his call was not heard by historians.

A similar approach is observed in modern Turkish historiography of the conflict. The situation is complicated by the fact that Turkish historical science has traditionally been isolated. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Turkish researchers are captivated by sources from Ottoman archives and depend solely on the contributions of the previous generations of scholars, in particular on the fundamental works of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha. Cevdet's *Tarih* (History) was based on the sultan's archives and the works of chroniclers who had preceded him as the court historiographer. In terms of methodology, Cevdet did not go much beyond traditional Ottoman chronicles, but the factual abundance of his work is impressive. This potential is actively exploited by Turkish historiography, and Cevdet's work is nowadays the cornerstone of any study of Turkish history in the period between 1774 and 1826. The historian had access to contemporary European sources but used them only marginally.<sup>16</sup> It is a paradox that the situation has not changed since he published his work a century and a half ago: even today, Turkish historiography is characterized by isolation from global historical science, lack of criticism of sources, and schematism.

When we use the phrase “Turkish historiography,” we refer only to the research conducted in modern Turkey. It does not apply to Ottoman studies, which are developing in research and university centers in Europe and the United States.<sup>17</sup> In the 1970s, another work appeared that was of great importance to Turkish historiography as a whole. This was the multi-volume *Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ottoman history) by İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, which was essentially a compilation of all the achievements of Turkish historiography, abounding with facts from the sources in Ottoman

<sup>13</sup> Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence, 1683–1797*, London: Routledge, 2016, 382–6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 397.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard, “Austria's Last Turkish War,” 15.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Târîh-i Cevdet*, Vol. 2, İstanbul: Sabah, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> For a clear differentiation between Turkish historical science and foreign Ottoman studies, see, for example, Robert Zens, “Turkish Historiography in the United States,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 8 (15) (2010), 149–77.

archives.<sup>18</sup> The overall poor quality of research on the course of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 in Turkish historiography persists to this day: only one scientific interpretation of the topic has been written so far. It is Serhat Kuzucu’s unpublished dissertation, which uses the term “Ottoman-Russian war.”<sup>19</sup> Kuzucu focused on the Russian front of the war and described it very thoroughly, mainly because he drew on old Russian imperial historiography to do it. As for the confrontation with the Austrians, the historian never went beyond the “canons” of the national historiography, remaining faithful to the Istanbul archives and sticking to a specific set of sources, which we will discuss below.

### The Problem of Sources and Focus

The overview of key works in the field of studies of the last Austro-Turkish War presented above gives us an opportunity to point out similar weaknesses of both American/European and Turkish historiography: the focus on only one side of the conflict, with no exceptions to this tendency so far. This state of affairs is due to the specificity of the source base that constitutes the background of the research on the subject. We are referring here to the so-called “native archives,” beyond which the researchers do not go.

The main obstacle for European researchers who want to study Turkish archival sources of the Ottoman era is the fact that the latter are written in the Ottoman language. Translations of Ottoman sources into modern languages are not published even in Turkey. The practice that has become widespread is the publishing of texts transliterated into the Latin alphabet. However, it does not solve the problem of difficulties in using those sources. Turkish historical science, in turn, has facilitated the publication of texts from Ottoman sources from the late 18th century due to the practice of preparing dissertations on particular historical or literary events. Studies of this kind are regularly published in Turkey.<sup>20</sup>

However, no matter how quickly translations of sources are published, it will not solve the problem of the informational potential of documents from Ottoman archives for the study of the last Austro-Turkish War since there were no regimental offices in the Ottoman army. Thus, war diaries, relays, current orders of commanders, and other documents created in the Ottoman camp have not survived to the present day.

<sup>18</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı tarihi*, Vol. 5.6, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995.

<sup>19</sup> Serhat Kuzucu, *1787–1792 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı*, Elazığ: Fırat Üniversitesi, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Ali Osman Çınar, *Mehmed Emin Edîb Efendi’nin Hayatı ve Târîhi*, İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 1999; Ahmet Üstüner, *Yusuf Paşa’nın Sefernâmesi (Sefer-nâme-i Serdâr-ı Ekrem Yusuf Paşa)*, Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi, 2005; Ümmügülüm Filiz Bayram, *Enverî Tarihi: III. Cilt (Metin ve Değerlendirme)*, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2014.

Meanwhile, Austrian archives abound with similar documents from the imperial army. The problem of Austro- or Turkocentrism is thus explained by the state of the source base. Creating a comprehensive and unambiguous history of the Austro-Turkish War is impossible, but European scholars are simply obliged to use the informational potential contained in Ottoman sources in their research. In addition to historical narratives, these include documents of the sultan's chancellery (*hatt-i sharif* or *hatt-i humayun*), which are the first step for Turkish historians when they start researching any issue from the Ottoman era.

### Promising Directions and Conclusions

All the difficulties in studying the problem of the last Austro-Turkish War, which we have discussed above, have not prevented a number of researchers from formulating certain thematic directions in which the historiography of this issue can develop. These directions are largely concentrated in the field of local history and specialized historical disciplines. Recently, a pervasive surge of interest in particular aspects of the Austro-Turkish confrontation in the late 18th century can be seen in the historiography of the various Balkan states. Bernard's aforementioned statement about "the silence of the Balkans" is no longer true. Most likely, the situation will now take the opposite turn. The new promising directions include the study of the history of individual fortress cities during the war undertaken by Turkish historians,<sup>21</sup> the fate of Turkish captives,<sup>22</sup> the state of the destruction suffered by particular territories as a result of the war (e.g., Banat where fierce fighting took place),<sup>23</sup> the reception of the war in culture,<sup>24</sup> etc.

<sup>21</sup> Hakan Engin, *1787–1792 Osmanlı-Rus, Avusturya Harpleri Sirasinda İbrail Kalesi*, Edirne: Trakya Üniversitesi, 2013; Cengiz Fedakâr, "1787–1792 Osmanlı-Avusturya, Rus Savaşları'nda Bender Kalesi," in *Prof. Dr. Erdoğan Merçil'e Armağan 75. Doğum Yılı*, Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2013, 383–93; idem, "Belgrad Kalesi'nin İşgali (1787–1792 Osmanlı-Avusturya, Rus Savaşlarında)," *History Studies* 11 (4) (2019), 1153–78.

<sup>22</sup> Lázár Balázs, "Turkish Captives in Hungary during Austria's Last Turkish War (1788–91)," *Hungarian Historical Review* 2 (2015), 418–44; idem, "Az ottomán hadifoglyokkal való bánásmódszabályozása II. József török háborúja (1788–1791)," in *Tanulmányok Pollmann Ferenc tiszteletére*, ed. Mihály Krámlí, Kálmán Mészáros, Budapest, 2019, 121–8; idem, "Ottomán hadifoglyok Szigetváron II. József török háborúja idején," *Az MTA PAB Hadtörténeti Munkabizottságának közleményei* 1 (1) (2020), 153–68.

<sup>23</sup> Costin Feneşan, "Pierderile Banatului in razboiul austro-turc din 1788–1789," *BANATICA* 30 (2020), 233–74.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Head, "'In the Orient of Vienna': Mozart's 'Turkish' Music and the Theatrical Self," in *Ottoman Empire and European Theatre*, Vol. 1: *The Age of Mozart and Selim III (1756–1808)*, ed. Michael Hüttler, Hans Ernst Weidinger, Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2013, 603–14; Reinhard Buchberger, "The Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 as Reflected in the Library of the Viennese Bibliophile Collector Max von Portheim," in *Ottoman Empire and European Theatre*, Vol. 2: *The Time of Joseph Haydn. From*



No less important are source studies on the informational potential of the periodicals from that time. A vivid example of this kind of research is a recent monograph by Polish author Małgorzata Karkocha.<sup>25</sup> Turkish researcher Hacer Topaktaş, in turn, has looked at the Eastern question during the Austro-Russo-Turkish conflict through the prism of Franciszek Piotr Potocki's embassy.<sup>26</sup>

In our opinion, one of the promising directions are historical geographical studies. On the one hand, they are needed because of the huge collection of cartographic materials preserved in European and Turkish archives, which include both general geographical maps from the late 18th century and maps (plans) of particular military operations, sieges of fortresses, and field battles. The informational potential of cartographic sources can match and sometimes even surpass that of historical narratives. There is already some progress in this direction.<sup>27</sup> It is impossible to ignore the problem of verifying historical and geographical nomenclature used in the sources from that period. Identification of a significant number of geographical names mentioned in Ottoman and Austrian sources poses obvious difficulties. The author of this article has mentioned some of them in his monograph about the military campaign of 1788.<sup>28</sup>

We deliberately tried to present the broadest panorama possible of the state and prospects of research on the problem of the history of the last Austro-Turkish War in order to precisely outline those areas that require the attention of modern researchers of the subject, not only historians but also linguists, cultural and literary scholars, and geographers. We still do not have a comprehensive overview of the hostilities of 1788–

---

*Sultan Mahmud I to Mahmud II (r.1730–1839)*, ed. Michael Hüttler, Hans Ernst Weidinger, Vienna: Holitzer Verlag, 2014, 231–54. See also particular sections of the project Mozart & Material Culture: 1788–1791: *Austro-Turkish War*, <https://mmc.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/entities/event/austro-turkish-war/> [accessed June 30, 2022]; *W. A. Mozart, Music for the Memorial to Field Marshall Gideon Laudon*, <https://mmc.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/souvenirs/souvenir-and-expression-in-mozarts-music/w-mozart-music-memorial-field-marshall-gideon-laudon/> [accessed June 30, 2022].

<sup>25</sup> Małgorzata Karkocha, *Flagrante bello. Wielka wojna wschodnia w relacjach prasy warszawskiej (1787–1792)*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> See the Polish edition of her research: Hacer Topaktaş, *Osmáńsko-polskie stosunki dyplomatyczne. Poselstwo Franciszka Piotra Potockiego do Stambułu (1788–1793)*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2017. The book is a Polish-language version of the study: Hacer Topaktaş, *Osmanlı-Lehistan Diplomatiği İlişkileri. Franciszek Piotr Potocki'nin İstanbul Elçiliği (1788–1793)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Iva Salopek Bogavčić, “Prilog istraživanju ratnih događanja na gradiškom području tijekom rata 1788.–1791.,” *Scrinia Slavonica* 7 (1) (2007), 161–200; Korić, “Bosansko pogranje”; eadem, “Jedna osmanska karta osmansko-austrijskog razgraničenja na području sjeverozapadne Bosne po odredbama Svištovskog mira (1791),” in *Bosna i Hercegovina kroz historiju. Povodom 40 godina naučnog rada akademika Mithada Kozličića: zbornik radova*, ed. Elvira Islamović, Bihać–Tuzla: Naučno društvo za razvoj društvenih i humanističkih nauka Bihać, Naučno društvo pravnika Tuzla, 2021, 103–12; Dan Dumitru Iacob, “Un plan militar austriac din 1788 privitor la oraşul Iaşi şi împerejurimile sale,” *Historia Urbana* 29 (2021), 201–25.

<sup>28</sup> Eugen Gorb, *Belgrad – Oczaków. Konfrontacja Imperium Osmańskiego z koalicją rosyjsko-austriacką w 1788 roku*, Zabrze–Tarnowskie Góry: Inforteditions, 2021.

1791 that would take into account the achievements of modern global historiography. We are not even talking about in-depth studies of particular aspects of the history of the aforementioned war. In our opinion, the rapid development of research related to this topic, which has been going on since the early 2000s, does not solve the main problem. In order to find the solution, we must first acknowledge all the weak points and gaps in national historiographies.

## References

- Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Târih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 2, İstanbul: Sabah, 1972.
- Balázs Lázár, “Az ottomán hadifoglyokkal való bánásmódszabályozása II. József török háborúja (1788–1791),” in *Tanulmányok Pollmann Ferenc tiszteletére*, ed. Mihály Krámlí, Kálmán Mészáros, Budapest, 2019, 121–8.
- Balázs Lázár, “Ottomán hadifoglyok Szigetváron II. József török háborúja idején,” *Az MTA PAB Hadtörténeti Munkabizottságának közleményei* 1 (1) (2020), 153–68.
- Balázs Lázár, “Turkish Captives in Hungary during Austria’s Last Turkish War (1788–91),” *Hungarian Historical Review* 2 (2015), 418–44.
- Bernard Paul P., “Austria’s Last Turkish War. Some Further Thoughts,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 19 (1) (1983), 15–31.
- Buchberger Reinhard, “The Austro-Turkish War of 1788–1791 as Reflected in the Library of the Viennese Bibliophile Collector Max von Portheim,” in *Ottoman Empire and European Theatre*, Vol. 2: *The Time of Joseph Haydn. From Sultan Mahmud I to Mahmud II (r.1730–1839)*, ed. Michael Hüttler, Hans Ernst Weidinger, Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2014, 231–54.
- Çınar Ali Osman, *Mehmed Emin Edib Efendi’nin Hayatı ve Târîhi*, İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 1999.
- Criste Oskar, *Kriege unter Kaiser Josef II*, Wien: L.W. Seidel, 1904.
- Engin Hakan, *1787–1792 Osmanlı-Rus, Avusturya Harpleri Sirasında İbrail Kalesi*, Edirne: Trakya Üniversitesi, 2013.
- Fedakâr Cengiz, “1787–1792 Osmanlı-Avusturya, Rus Savaşları’nda Bender Kalesi,” in *Prof. Dr. Erdoğan Merçil’e Armağan 75. Doğum Yılı*, İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2013, 383–93.
- Fedakâr Cengiz, “Belgrad Kalesi’nin İşgali (1787–1792 Osmanlı-Avusturya, Rus Savaşlarında),” *History Studies* 11 (4) (2019), 1153–78.
- Feneşan Costin, “Pierderile Banatului in razboiul austro-turc din 1788–1789,” *BANATICA* 30 (2020), 233–74.
- Filiz Bayram Ümmügülsüm, *Enveri Tarihi: III. Cilt (Metin ve Değerlendirme)*, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2014.
- Gorb Eugen, *Belgrad – Oczaków. Konfrontacja Imperium Osmańskiego z koalicją rosyjsko-austriacką w 1788 roku*, Zabrze–Tarnowskie Góry: Inforteditions, 2021.
- Head Matthew, “‘In the Orient of Vienna’: Mozart’s ‘Turkish’ Music and the Theatrical Self,” in *Ottoman Empire and European Theatre*, Vol. 1: *The Age of Mozart and Selim III (1756–1808)*, ed. Michael Hüttler, Hans Ernst Weidinger, Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2013, 603–14.
- Hochedlinger Michael, *Austria’s Wars of Emergence, 1683–1797*, London: Routledge, 2016.
- Iacob Dan Dumitru, “Un plan militar austriac din 1788 privitor la oraşul Iaşi şi împrejurimile sale,” *Historia Urbana* 29 (2021), 201–25.

- Karkocha Małgorzata, *Flagrante bello. Wielka wojna wschodnia w relacjach prasy warszawskiej (1787–1792)*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2021.
- Korić Elma, “Bosansko pogranje u vrijeme Dubičkog rata 1788–1791,” *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 65 (2016), 213–37.
- Korić Elma, “Jedna osmanska karta osmansko-austrijskog razgraničenja na području sjeverozapadne Bosne po odredbama Svištovskog mira (1791),” in *Bosna i Hercegovina kroz historiju. Povodom 40 godina naučnog rada akademika Mithada Kozličića: zbornik radova*, ed. Elvira Islamović, Bihać–Tuzla: Naučno društvo za razvoj društvenih i humanističkih nauka Bihać, Naučno društvo pravnika Tuzla, 2021, 103–12.
- Kuzucu Serhat, *1787–1792 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı*, Elazığ: Fırat Üniversitesi, 2012.
- Mayer Matthew Z., *Joseph II and the Austro-Ottoman War, 1788–1791*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Mayer Matthew Z., *Joseph II and the Campaign of 1788 against the Ottoman Turks*, Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 2000.
- Mozart & Material Culture, *1788–1791: Austro-Turkish War*, <https://mmc.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/entities/event/austro-turkish-war/> [accessed June 30, 2022].
- Mozart & Material Culture, *W. A. Mozart, Music for the Memorial to Field Marshall Gideon Laudon*, <https://mmc.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/souvenirs/souvenir-and-expression-in-mozarts-music/w-mozart-music-memorial-field-marshall-gideon-laudon/> [accessed June 30, 2022].
- Petrov Andrey, *Vtoraâ tureckââ vojna v carstvovanie imperatricy Ekateriny II 1787–1791 g.*, Vols. 1–2, Sankt-Peterburg: Tipografiâ N. Golike, 1880.
- Rédvay István, “Az erdélyi szorosok védelme 1788-ban,” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 40 (1) (1939), 229–57.
- Rédvay István, “II. József török háborúja (1788–1790). (Első közlemény),” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 43 (1) (1942), 1–28.
- Rédvay István, “II. József török háborúja (1788–1790). (Harmadik közlemény),” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 44 (1–2) (1943), 1–34.
- Rédvay István, “II. József török háborúja (1788–1790). (Második közlemény),” *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 43 (1) (1942), 179–200.
- Roider Jr. Karl A., *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700–1790*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Salopek Bogavčić Iva, “Prilog istraživanju ratnih događanja na gradiškom području tijekom rata 1788.–1791.,” *Scrinia Slavonica* 7 (1) (2007), 161–200.
- Topaktaş Hacer, *Osmanlı-Lehistan Diplomatiği İlişkileri. Franciszek Piotr Potocki'nin İstanbul Elçiliği (1788–1793)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014.
- Topaktaş Hacer, *Osmańsko-polskie stosunki dyplomatyczne. Poselstwo Franciszka Piotra Potockiego do Stambułu (1788–1793)*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2017.
- Üstüner Ahmet, *Yusuf Paşa'nın Sefernâmesi (Sefer-nâme-i Serdâr-ı Ekrem Yusuf Paşa)*, Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi, 2005.
- Uzunçarşılı İsmail Hakkı, *Osmanlı tarihi*, Vol. 5.6, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995.
- Vaniček Franz, *Specialgeschichte der Militärgrenze. Aus Originalquellen und Quellenwerken geschöpft*, Vol. 3, Wien: Aus der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1875.
- Wikipedia, *1787–1791 Osmanlı-Avusturya Savaşı*, [https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/1787-1791\\_Osmanlı%C4%B1-Avusturya\\_Sava%C5%9F%C4%B1](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/1787-1791_Osmanlı%C4%B1-Avusturya_Sava%C5%9F%C4%B1) [accessed June 27, 2022].

Wikipedia, *Austro-Turkish War (1788–1791)*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Turkish\\_War\\_\(1788%E2%80%931791\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Turkish_War_(1788%E2%80%931791)) [accessed June 27, 2022].

Wikipedia, *Russisch-Österreichischer Türkenkrieg (1787–1792)*, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russisch-%C3%96sterreichischer\\_T%C3%BCrkenkrieg\\_\(1787%E2%80%931792\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russisch-%C3%96sterreichischer_T%C3%BCrkenkrieg_(1787%E2%80%931792)) [accessed June 27, 2022].

Zens Robert, “Turkish Historiography in the United States,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 8 (15) (2010), 149–77.

## **The Attitude of Bosnian Muslims Toward the Ottoman Empire in the Years 1850–1914\***

*Tomasz Jacek Lis*

Jagiellonian University, Poland

e-mail: [t.lis@uj.edu.pl](mailto:t.lis@uj.edu.pl)

ORCID: 0000-0003-0188-5755

### **Abstract**

The article describes how the attitude of Bosnian Muslims toward the Ottoman Empire changed between 1850 and 1914. This was a very important period, as Turkish rule in Bosnia ended and Austro-Hungarian rule began. For some Bosnian elites, anti-Ottomanism was one of the elements of their national identity. The article is based on literature, as well as on archival materials found by the author in the archives in Sarajevo.

### **Keywords**

Bosnia and Herzegovina, anti-Ottomanism, Muslims in the Balkans

Although, as a rule, the periodization of the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 19th century clearly separates the so-called Ottoman period (until 1878) from the Austro-Hungarian period (from 1878 onward), when it comes to social history – and the attitude of the Muslim population toward the Ottoman Empire should be considered as such – this division somewhat loses its meaning, for the turning point here are the events of 1850–1851. It was then that the centuries-old ties between Bosnian-Herzegovinian Muslims and Istanbul finally broke, which had consequences for the subsequent history of Bosnian-Turkish relations.

---

\* The research presented in this article was financed by the grant of the Polish National Science Centre (NCN): *Social Changes of the Muslim Communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria in the Second Half of the 19th and at the Beginning of the 20th Century: Comparative Studies* (2020/39/B/HS3/01717).

In this article, I will try to outline how Bosnia and Herzegovina's relationship with the Ottoman Empire changed from the mid-19th century until the outbreak of World War I. This period covers both the end of the Ottoman rule over the *vilayet* of Bosnia and most of the so-called Austro-Hungarian "occupation" – excluding the First World War. I will focus mainly on the Muslim intelligentsia because it was the main carrier of new ideas. In addition, due to the prevailing illiteracy, it was also the only group that left behind a literary legacy.

The article shows only the perspective of the Bosniaks since it is impossible to present here the entire issue of the difficult relations between the Ottoman Empire and the *vilayet* of Bosnia or in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are few English-language publications about Ottoman and Bosniak relations in the 19th century, so in order to gain insight on the Turkish perspective, one would have to refer to Turkish literature or conduct a search in Turkish archives. For this reason, I decided to limit the scope of my article only to the perspective of Bosnian Muslims.

In the first place, I used sources, both manuscripts and printed documents, kept in Bosnian archives: the Archives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Arhiv Bosne and Hercegovine) and the Sarajevo Historical Archives (Historijski arhiv Sarajevo). In addition, I browsed through selected press titles and scientific literature. I would hereby like to reflect on several points concerning the correlation between political changes and the attitude of the Muslim elite toward the Ottoman Empire, as well as the impact of generational changes on this issue.

### **Bosnian Muslims Facing Ottoman Attempts at Reform**

The period from the 1830s to the 1850s was very difficult for the Bosnian *vilayet*. During that time, the westernmost province of the Ottoman Empire was once again shaken by various kinds of internal unrest, the main cause of which was local resistance to the Tanzimat<sup>1</sup> reforms. As a result of growing pressure from Istanbul, Bosnian Muslims such as Ali Pasha Rizvanbegović, who had hitherto been loyal to the sultan and his officials, began to be hostile to Istanbul's policy toward Bosnia in the late 1840s.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to reform the Ottoman Empire, successive sultans decided to carry out reforms in all the provinces. This was often met with resistance from the local population. Such was the case, for example, in the Bosnia *vilayet*, where new revolts broke out almost every year from the 1830s to 1850, among which the act of disobedience of Husein-kapetan Gradašćević, who managed to seize control of part of Bosnia in 1831, is particularly noteworthy. Sadik Šehić, *Zmaj od Bosne. Husein-kapetan Gradašćević*, Tuzla: Front slobode, 1991; Senad Hasanagić, *Drugo lice bune Husein-Kapetana Gradašćevića*, Brčko: Knjigolubac, 2018; Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia. A Short History*, New York: New York University Press, 1994, 120–4.

<sup>2</sup> During Gradašćević's revolt, Rizvanbegović sided with the Turkish vizier against Husein-kapetan. Tomasz J. Lis, "Bośniacy przeciwko Imperium Osmańskiemu. Bunt ludności muzułmańskiej w Bośni

This hostility between the local provincial elite and the sultan's regents was caused by several factors. While in the 16th, 17th, and even 18th centuries, the goals of the provinces and the center had been converging, the beginning of the 19th century brought a complete rift between the aspirations of Bosnian Muslims and Istanbul. Without dwelling too much on the analysis of this phenomenon, let me just outline the main bone of contention. At one point in the earlier centuries, Bosnia was the gateway to the Ottoman Empire, which not only opened the Porte to the world but also protected it from the temptations of the Western, Christian world. As a result, Bosnian Muslims defending the Empire's borders were held in special esteem.<sup>3</sup> In short, by defending the territories of the Porte, they defended their land. For this reason, they developed a much stronger attachment to their homeland, in which they themselves were masters because, for example, the function of *kapetans* (border defenders) became at some point hereditary. That is why the authorities in Istanbul, who wanted to liquidate the Janissary troops as part of their reforms in the early 19th century, met with great resistance from the local population, which not only sympathized with the Janissaries (against whom the blade of the sultan's sword was aimed) but above all feared that it would lose its privileges.

It was then, at the beginning of the 19th century, that the Bosnian Muslim elites began to view Istanbul with hostility for the first time. Attachment to the value of their own privileges proved stronger than Islam, which for centuries had been a strong ideological pillar connecting the center with the provinces. Such dilemmas, however, concerned not only Bosnian Muslims but the Islamic world in general, which had to redefine its role in a changing reality.<sup>4</sup> The Tanzimat reforms and the manner in which they were carried out in Bosnia made the local Beys and Aghas feel that the sultan was not pursuing their goals but his own, which were contrary to the Bosnian interest. Although during Husein-kapetan Gradašćević's uprising in 1831, the Turkish army could count on the support of a part of the local population,<sup>5</sup> in 1850, there was no chance of an important representative of the local elite supporting the sultan. The most important people from both Bosnia and Herzegovina voted together against directives from Istanbul. Some took up arms against the sultan's regents, while others, like the vizier of Herzegovina, Rizvanbegović, simply disregarded the orders from the capital.<sup>6</sup>

---

w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku," *Balkanica Posnanensia* 28 (2) (2021), 89–91; Hamdija Kapidžić, *Ali-paša Rizvanbegović i njegovo doba*, Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Ottoman Empire's border guards called *kapetans*, see Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Kapetanije u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Fikret Karčić, *The Bosniaks and the Challenges of Modernity. Late Ottoman and Habsburg Times*, Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1999, 31–2; Ivo Andrić, *Razvoj duhovnog života u Bosni pod uticajem turske vladavine*, Banja Luka–Beograd: Zadužbina Petar Kočić, 2012, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Hannes Grandits, *Multikonfesionalna Hercegovina. Vlast i lojalnost u kasnoosmanskom društvu*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2014, 40–4; Hasanagić, *Drugo lice*, 19–22; Ahmed S. Aličić, *Pokret za autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1832. godine*, Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, 1996, 296.

<sup>6</sup> Kapidžić, *Ali-paša Rizvanbegović*, 107–8.

The insubordination of the local Beys and Aghas forced the sultan to take radical steps, and he finally decided to send an armed expedition to Bosnia to pacify the Muslim elites there. To this end, in 1850, he dispatched Omer-Pasha Latas, who specialized in pacifying rebellious Ottoman provinces. For Bosnian Muslims, this was the ultimate proof that the Porte had turned its back on them. They felt all the more humiliated because both Latas and his closest associates were converts who had accepted Islam for specific benefits. This was the case, among others, of Antoni Iliński (Mehmed Iskander Pasha), a spy for the Hôtel Lambert, who, fearing that he would be handed over to the Russians, decided to accept Islam and then serve in the Ottoman army.<sup>7</sup> However, according to the Bosnian Beys themselves, he ignored the principles of Islam by getting drunk with alcohol and destroying mosques during the fighting in the years 1850–1851.<sup>8</sup> It was no coincidence that the sultan used such people to pacify disobedient Bosnia because, as he rightly assumed, mercenaries-converts would be more ruthless than those who had been raised in Islamic culture. Omer-Pasha Latas became for Bosnian Muslims a symbol of the sultan's treachery. His bloody crackdown on disobedient Beys raised doubts even among the Ottoman administration.<sup>9</sup> Ivo Andrić described him in his novel thus,

His task was to discipline and bring to heel not the rebellious populace nor an external enemy but those who had ruled Bosnia for centuries and who had until the previous day been called the sultan's sons: the beys, the leaders and members of the most prominent families "who are from the Turkish bones."<sup>10</sup>

The period from 1851 to the 1860s presents a slightly different picture if we take into account the situation in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian parts of the Empire. Although the Beys were pacified throughout the entire *eyalet*, unrest on the Herzegovinian-Montenegrin border continued to cause concern. Vladika Danilo, seeking to take advantage of the internal difficulties of the neighboring country, tried to expand his territory.<sup>11</sup> Herzegovinian Muslims not only accused the Montenegrins of stirring up trouble but also blamed Pasha Latas's policy of distributing weapons to Christians living on the border because those weapons were then used to terrorize local Muslims.<sup>12</sup> It was not until 1863–1864 that an armistice was achieved on the Herzegovinian-Montenegrin border.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the Ottoman authorities continued to be distrusted in Mostar.

<sup>7</sup> Jerzy S. Łątka, *Lew nasz, lew polski. Pasza Iskender (Antoni Iliński)*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Historii i Kultury Turcji, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Aleksander Jabłonowski, *Pisma Aleksandra Jabłonowskiego*, Vol. 5: *Słowiańszczyzna południowa oraz Wołosza i Albania*, Warszawa: E. Wende i s-ka, 1911, 68–71.

<sup>9</sup> Kerima Filan, *Bosna i Hercegovina u spisima Ahmeda Dževdet-paše*, Sarajevo: Connectum, 2017, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Ivo Andrić, *Omer Pasha Latas. Marshal to the Sultan*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth, New York: New York Review Books, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Edin Radušić, *Bosna i Hercegovina u britanskoj politici od 1857 do 1878 godine. Od branitelja i zaštitnika do tužioca i sudije*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2013, 117–8.

<sup>12</sup> Filan, *Bosna i Hercegovina*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> Hannes Grandits, *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia. Conflicting Agencies and Imperial Appropriations*, London–New York: Routledge, 2022, 3–4.



The situation was completely different in Bosnia, which began to stabilize shortly after Pasha Latas left the area. The relocation of the country's capital from Travnik to Sarajevo gave new impetus to the development of this part of the *eyalet*. Although the majority of Muslims were hostile to the Tanzimat reforms, viewing them as harmful to their interests, the liberalization of the economy and, above all, the opening to foreigners gave impetus to reforms that contributed to the province's economic uplift. Great credit was due to the two governors, Hurshid Mehmed Pasha (1852–1856) and, above all, Topal Sherif Osman Pasha (1861–1869). It was during their rule that the greatest progress was made in Bosnia, the symbol of which was the nearly 80-kilometer railway line connecting Banja Luka with Dobrljin.<sup>14</sup> The railway line, as well as significant investments in road infrastructure, led to the development of trade in Bosnia, which was possible thanks to the new Muslim elite, whose main occupation was the selling of goods. As a result of the activities of the Ottoman authorities, which were concentrated on the development of Sarajevo as a capital, it was in this city that the strongest group of local merchants emerged. Previously, trade was mainly carried out by Orthodox Serbs and Sephardic Jews, whereas the reforms of the 1850s and 1860s allowed a new stratum of Muslim entrepreneurs to develop.<sup>15</sup>

Not only the economic situation had changed in favor of the local Muslim elite, but also the policy of the authorities in Istanbul, which saw the need for greater integration of provincial Bosnia into the center. One of its elements was the inclusion of representatives of the local elite in the newly created army command. Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Ottoman authorities decided to conduct conscription in the *vilayet* in 1864, it turned out that, contrary to the fears of mutiny,<sup>16</sup> many young Bosnian Muslims willingly joined the Ottoman army. The Ottoman authorities, having understood the mistakes they had made earlier, rightly invoked the patriotic feelings of young Muslims toward Bosnia. As noted by Ahmed Dževet Pasha, from the very beginning, efforts were made to emphasize that these troops were first and foremost a Bosnian army, which was supposed to defend the country first and only then the sultan.<sup>17</sup> The sultan's reconciliation with the Bosnian Beys and Aghas was also facilitated by the international situation. In 1862, an incident occurred in neighboring Serbia, as a result of which the majority of Muslims, some of whom had sought refuge

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 11–2; Michael Palairat, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914. Evolution Without Development*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 135–9; Grga Martić, *Zapamćenja (1829–1878)*, Zagreb: Knjiz, Knjižara Jugoslavenske Akademije, 1906, 41–2.

<sup>15</sup> Hana Younis, *Od dućana do pozorišta. Sarajevo trgovačka elita 1851–1878*, Sarajevo: Institut za Historiju, 2016, 31–4. It is worth mentioning the changes that took place in the activities of *esnafs* – Ottoman guilds, which also engaged in trade; Iljas Hadžibegović, *Postanak radničke klase u Bosni i Hercegovini i njen razvoj do 1914*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1980, 25–6; Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Esnafi i obrti u Bosni i Hercegovini (1463–1878)*, Sarajevo: Naučno društvo NR Bosne i Hercegovine, 1961.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth remembering that in 1831, one of the reasons for the Bey rebellion was the general mobilization and the desire to introduce identical, modern uniforms for the military.

<sup>17</sup> Filan, *Bosna i Hercegovina*, 182–92.

in Bosnia,<sup>18</sup> were removed from Belgrade as well as from a large part of the autonomous unit. Their compatriots thus decided that it was better to establish relations with the sultan in the face of the growing threat from Christian Europe rather than to have to flee their homes, as was the case in Serbia.

That the love of the Muslims from the *vilayet* of Bosnia for the sultan was only a need of the moment is best evidenced by the events that took place in 1878 when, after three years of unrest, the great powers finally sat down for talks. First in San Stefano and then, when the arrangements there turned out to be unsatisfactory, in Berlin. The fact that the voices of the inhabitants of the *vilayet* were not taken into account did not surprise anyone, while the disregard for the sultan and his will was a clear sign of Istanbul's weakness against the Bosnian elites. As a result, there was no longer any point in supporting someone whose opinion was not being considered at all. Therefore, in August 1878, when rumors confirmed that the *vilayet* of Bosnia had been handed over to the Austrian rule in Sarajevo, a revolt broke out, which was directed first against the sultan's regent and then against the Austro-Hungarians. After the governor and part of the Turkish troops had fled, the National Authority (Narodna Vlada) was proclaimed, which soon proceeded to crack down on the Ottoman supporters, throwing them in prison.<sup>19</sup>

On the one hand, the Muslim elites of Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected the Ottoman Empire as an uncertain guarantor of their interests, while on the other, they did not want to accept the idea of a Christian ruler. That is why they instigated a rebellion which resulted in fierce resistance to the troops under the yellow and black banner. Once again, in the 19th century, the thought of their own autonomous state began to emerge among the Bosnian-Herzegovinian elites professing Islam. And once again, it was brutally suppressed.

### **The Attitudes of the Muslim Intelligentsia Toward the Ottoman Heritage During the Austro-Hungarian "Occupation" Period**

A certain analogy can be found between the pacification of the Beys by Latas Pasha and the occupation of Bosnia in 1878. In both cases, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Beys were suppressed with extreme violence. And just like in 1851, at the end of the 1880s, they felt that their defeat was caused by the sultan himself. He was the one who had failed to stand up to the Western powers. But while the bitter military defeat could be accepted, the knowledge that the sultan had agreed, both in Berlin and less than a year

---

<sup>18</sup> Hifzija Suljkić, "Iseljavanje Muslimana iz Užica u Bosnu 1862," *Glasnik Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u SFRJ* 2 (1991), 161–79; Safet Bandžović, "Iseljavanje muslimanskog stanovništva iz kneževine Srbije u Bosanski vilajet (1862–1867)," *Znakovi vremena. Časopis za filozofiju, religiju, znanost i društvenu praksu* 12 (2001), 149–71.

<sup>19</sup> Mihovil Mandić, *Povijest okupacije Bosne i Hercegovine 1878*, Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1910, 61–4; Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Sarajevo u doba okupacije Bosne 1878*, Sarajevo: Rekultura, 2021, 52.

later in Novi Pazar, to hand over the *vilayet* to the Catholic emperor from the Habsburg dynasty was much worse.<sup>20</sup>

The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina thus faced a very difficult task, as they had to find a completely new point of reference, which would no longer be the sultan and Istanbul. The result was the disintegration of the Muslim community, which looked for different ways to find its identity. This search was all the more difficult since it was the period when nations began to form throughout the Balkan Peninsula. The phenomenon of nationalism that appeared among the Porte's subjects was something new in that region.<sup>21</sup>

Until then, religion had been the most important determinant of group membership in the Ottoman Empire. Alternatively, as in the case of the Bosnian Muslims, it was the attachment to a place. By contrast, the 19th century saw the emergence of a completely new category called "nation," which in no way fit into the existing identification categories. Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina were not adequately prepared for such new ideas. This was especially true of the older generation, whose members did not understand what phenomenon they were dealing with. This group consisted mostly of landowners whose innate caution and conservatism made them go back to their rural settlements and not take an active part in politics.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the urban space, which until then had been dominated by Muslims, began to change. It became a field of activity for the new elite, including foreigners arriving in large numbers in Bosnia and Herzegovina,<sup>23</sup> e.g., Austrians, Poles, Czechs, etc. The Muslims who remained in the major urban centers were mainly officials, entrepreneurs, and members of the local administration. They were therefore much more open-minded than the Beys living in the provinces. They began to impose a certain way of thinking by means of the press, which was actively developing at the time.

But let us return for a moment to Islam itself, for, as we know, the sultan was not only a secular leader but also a caliph, i.e., the most important religious leader. His advantage in this respect was thus greater than that of any other ruler. Therefore, in order to deal with this situation, the Austrians decided to create a new religious function of *reis-ulema*, which was to be the highest religious authority for Bosnian Muslims. To this end, they communicated with the sultan, who more or less willingly agreed

<sup>20</sup> The Novi Pazar convention protected the interests of Muslims and ensured their safety, freedom of religion, etc. The Austrian emperor was supposed to be the guarantor of those rights. "Carigradska (Novopazarska) konvencija," in Ljubomir Zovko, *Studije iz pravne povijesti Bosne i Hercegovine 1878.–1914.*, Mostar: Pravni fakultet Sveučilišta u Mostaru, 2007, 124–6.

<sup>21</sup> Victor Roudometof argues that the anti-Ottoman uprisings that took place before the 19th century were essentially socially and religiously motivated rebellions and that the national element did not emerge until later. Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy. The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans*, London: Greenwood Press, 2001, 68.

<sup>22</sup> Husnija Kamberović, *Begovski zemljišni posjedi u Bosni i Hercegovini 1878. do 1918. godine*, Sarajevo: Ibin Sin, 2005, 94–5.

<sup>23</sup> Iljas Hadžibegović, *Bosanskohercegovački gradovi na razmeđu 19. i 20. stoljeća*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2004, 19–22.

to such a solution, as a result of which the supreme authority in the Islamic world, as well as the members of the *ulem-medželisa*, were dependent on the will of the Austrian emperor.<sup>24</sup> This turned out to be extremely helpful, as exemplified by the organization of Bosnian regiments in which Bosnian Muslims served. The *reis-ulema* subordinate to the emperor agreed to issue a *fatwa*, thanks to which a Muslim soldier who died in a war waged on behalf of the Catholic emperor was to be treated as a *shaheed*, a martyr.<sup>25</sup> In return, he was guaranteed a lifetime pension by the Joint Minister of Finance.<sup>26</sup>

It became apparent fairly quickly that favoring the new government could bring some benefits. Even though at the state level, the Austrian authorities decided to rely mainly on their officials and the military, when it came to local positions, such as city mayors, members of the city council, as well as the staff of Sharia courts, loyal Muslims were readily available at that time.<sup>27</sup> As a consequence, the number of people who saw a certain historical opportunity arising from the Austrian presence, not only for themselves but also for the entire Muslim community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, began to grow. Simultaneously, the same people who declared support for the emperor categorically rejected the possibility of returning to the Ottoman Empire. One of the first to declare this was Mehmed-bey Kapetanović Ljubušak, who said in 1886 that there was no possibility of Bosnia becoming part of the empire again.<sup>28</sup> He also drew attention to several important issues, the first of which was history. Kapetanović Ljubušak brought up the suppression of Gradašević's revolts and the pacifications of Omer-Pasha Latas, which in his opinion were to be worse than how the Austrian generals had treated Bosnian Muslims defeated in 1878. In addition, he pointed out that historically, even when a Bosnian Muslim attained a prominent position at the Turkish court, they still felt more connected to their country of origin than to the sultan, the prime example of which had been Mehmed Pasha Sokolović. The last but no less important argument he invoked was the issue of the language used by Bosnian Muslims, who in this respect were closer to Croats and Serbs than to Turks.<sup>29</sup>

Kapetanović Ljubušak was a representative of the oldest, conciliatory generation, which willingly cooperated with the Austrian authorities. This cooperation was so advanced that he agreed to personally endorse the idea of Bosnianness, i.e., a separate Muslim national identity, which was to function as something separate from Croatian and Serbian nationality.<sup>30</sup> However, this did not suit all Bosnian Muslims, especially since there were very strong national currents that encouraged them to adopt Croatian

<sup>24</sup> Mustafa Imamović, *Historija države i prava Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo: PIKOK, 1999, 296–7.

<sup>25</sup> Enver Imamović, *Historija bosanske vojske*, Sarajevo: Edicija Bosanski korijeni, 1999, 290–1.

<sup>26</sup> Document no. 14, in *Persönliche Vorkerkungen von General Oskar Potiorek über die innerpolitische Lage in Bosnien und der Herzegowina*, ed. Dževad Juzbašić, Zijad Šehić, Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 2015, 167.

<sup>27</sup> Hana Younis, *Biti kadija u kršćanskom carstvu*, Sarajevo: Institut za Historiju, 2021, 247–8.

<sup>28</sup> Mehmed beg Kapetanović-Ljubušak, *Što misle muhamedanci u Bosni*, Sarajevo: Spindler i Löschner, 1886, 7–8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>30</sup> Muhsin Rizvić, *Bosansko muslimanska književnost u doba preporoda (1887–1918)*, Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1990, 76.

and even Serbian identity. Such actions were indirectly supported by the Austrian “occupier,” who turned a blind eye to Croatian national propaganda. Croats were not only present in the civil administration, where they held high-ranking positions, but also established cultural and scientific societies, etc. As a result, many young Muslims adopted the Croatian identity, like Ademaga Mešić, probably the most famous Bosnian Muslim and promoter of the “Croatian-Muslim” idea.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, while the older generation of the Muslim intelligentsia sought primarily national distinctiveness (cultural, linguistic, etc.), the younger generation, brought up already during the “occupation” period, believed that their Bosnianness could be achieved both by drawing on Serbian and, above all, Croatian culture. Both groups, however, strongly rejected the ties with the Ottoman Empire. *Bošnjak*, the first journal addressed to a Muslim reader founded in 1891, was written entirely in South Slavic, a language understood by most Bosnian Muslims, whereas *Behar*, which appeared nine years later, emphasized the need to separate even further from the Ottoman heritage, suggesting turning to the source of Islam, which was to be found in Arab culture.<sup>32</sup> The paper was the press organ of young Muslims who wanted to reform Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>33</sup> Safer Bey-Bašagić was the face of the magazine, as well as of the entire movement to modernize Muslim institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (especially *madrasas* and *waqfs*). He was born in 1870 and became known as one of the greatest Muslim scholars, being at the same time a great devotee of Islam and the heritage of Bosnian followers of this religion. At the beginning of the 20th century, he defended his doctorate in Vienna, specializing in Middle Eastern languages: Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.<sup>34</sup>

In his writings, in addition to the topics of the renewal of Islam, its reform, etc., he also referred to the history and attitudes toward the Ottoman Empire. We can observe this on the example of his lecture on the history of Bosnia, *Kratka uputa u prošlost Bosne i Hercegovine (od g. 1463.–1850.)*, in which, like Kapetanović Ljubušak, he pointed out that the year 1850 was a clear turning point in terms of relations between Bosnia and the sultan.

In our humble opinion, as will be seen later, Bosnia and Herzegovina did not lose its independence and freedom in the 15th century but in the middle of the 19th century; namely, when Omer-Pasha Latas with Byzantine cunning broke in, beat, and destroyed all rights and sovereignty. Before him, Bosnia-Herzegovina had always been a state within a state ruled only by the Bosniaks on behalf of the sultan, benevolent governors, or sons of the land.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Nada Kisić Kolanović, “Ademaga Mešić i hrvatska nacionalna ideja 1895.–1918. godine,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 40 (3) (2008), 1119–40.

<sup>32</sup> Rizvić, *Bosansko muslimanska književnost*, 185.

<sup>33</sup> Todor Kruševac, *Bosansko-Hercegovački listovi u XIX veku*, Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1978, 380–4; Salih Jalimam, “Historijsko-edukativna uloga časopisa ‘Behar’ u jačanju identiteta Bošnjaka,” *Znakovi vremena. Časopis za filozofiju, religiju, znanost i društvenu praksu* 21 (2003), 19–27.

<sup>34</sup> Historijski arhiv Sarajevo, Safet beg Bašagić, kut. 3, ref. no. 279.

<sup>35</sup> Safvet beg Bašagić, *Kratka uputa u prošlost Bosne i Hercegovine (od g. 1463.–1850.)*, Sarajevo: Vlastita Naklada, 1900, 18.

Describing the fall of the Kingdom of Bosnia to the Ottoman Empire in the Middle Ages, he called this event a *disaster*.<sup>36</sup>

Osman Nuri Hadžić, a close associate of Bašagić and his elder by one year, went even further in his criticism of the Ottoman Empire. In his pamphlet, which was intended as a response to the accusations against Islam made by Serbian scholar Milan Nedeljković, he stated that Islam as a religion and the Ottoman Empire as a state should be separated.<sup>37</sup> As a result, Islam could not be blamed for the Porte's mistakes as a state. Moreover, the true heirs of Islam were not the Ottomans but the Arabs, under whose rule all states flourished.<sup>38</sup>

In 1903, Mulabdić Edhem collected what he considered to be the most important articles from *Behar* and published a kind of program declaration of the "Gajret" association. It showed clearly the attitude of young Muslim intellectuals toward the past. By declaring their willingness to act "for God and the nation," they tried to push through their vision of Islam, which was to be, as Nuri Hadžić proclaimed, primarily an Arab legacy that had been appropriated in some way by the Ottoman Empire. It was the Arabs who, for many centuries, "enlightened the Western world" and led a kind of intellectual conquest, while the Ottomans abandoned these practices in favor of the sword, which was used to achieve their military goals.<sup>39</sup> The Bosniaks had to recover from the fact that the sultan had turned his back on them in the mid-19th century and focus on science, for it was "science that was needed like a piece of bread."

The above discussion shows that both the older and younger generations of the Bosniak intelligentsia during the Austro-Hungarian "occupation" rejected the Ottoman heritage. This was especially true of that part of the society which was open to cooperation with the new authorities – mainly those, who, like Kapetanović Ljubušak or the younger generation gathered around Gajret, tried to modernize the Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the spirit of Western liberalism.

The supporters of Bosnia and Herzegovina's reunion with the Ottoman Empire were thus decidedly a minority. Even the anti-Habsburg and pro-Serbian Muslims critical of Bašagić were more likely to want Bosnia and Herzegovina to become part of Serbia than fall under the sultan's rule again.<sup>40</sup>

The greatest support for the Ottoman Empire, however, existed in the provinces. For conservative Beys, proposals of any reforms, whether agrarian or concerning the functioning of religious institutions (schools, courts, mosques), were perceived as a threat. Therefore, it was believed that, despite many historical events, Istanbul was closer to the heart of a Bosnian Muslim than Vienna. What is more, in the countryside, in addition to big landowners, a large percentage of people were migrants who, for

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Osman Nuri Hadžić, *Islam i kultura*, Zagreb: Tisak dioničke tiskare, 1894, 63–4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 38.

<sup>39</sup> Edhem Mulabdić, *Gajret*, Sarajevo: Risto J. Savić, 1903, 9–10.

<sup>40</sup> *Proganjanje islamskog naroda u Herceg-Bosni*, Novi Sad: Srpska štamparija Svet. Miletića, 1900, 12.

various (usually economic) reasons, decided to return to Bosnia and Herzegovina after having failed to succeed within the borders of the Porte.<sup>41</sup>

However, there were Bosnian Muslims who were doing quite well after moving to the Ottoman Empire. Especially if they had a stable job, e.g., as a military man, as was the case with Nazif-beg, whose wife Esma née Bakarević corresponded with her brother who had stayed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A part of the well-known Sarajevo merchant family called Bakarević had moved to Istanbul in the 1890s but still maintained letter contact with their relatives.<sup>42</sup> Thanks to their surviving correspondence, we can see how the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina fared in the Ottoman Empire, as well as how they felt about it. Although Bosnian Muslims in Istanbul were slowly assimilating – just like Esma, who over time began to forget the language of her fathers and weave more and more Turkish words into her letters<sup>43</sup> – we do not find in the correspondence any apotheosis of life in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, which would be contrasted with the hardships of life under the Catholic emperor. On the contrary, we rather get a picture of a country torn by various political unrests,<sup>44</sup> where life was not that easy, especially if one did not have a sufficiently high income.<sup>45</sup>

While we do not find any instances of pro-Ottoman agitation on the part of migrants in the legacy of the Bakarević family, Robert J. Donia, in his work on the Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina living under Habsburg rule, gives several examples of permanent residents of the Ottoman Empire who engaged in anti-Austrian activities.<sup>46</sup> This was especially true of military personnel such as Seifullah efendi (actually Seifo Vidimli), who escaped from a Bosnian regiment and enlisted in the sultan's army. It was he who, in 1898, sent a memorandum to the sultan pointing out Austria's failure to honor the agreements concluded in both Berlin and Novi Pazar, and also listing offenses allegedly committed by Austrian authorities against Bosnian Muslims.<sup>47</sup>

Such voices were strengthened at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries during the struggle for the so-called religious autonomy of Bosnian Muslims, which they finally managed to obtain in 1909. Since the struggle for religious autonomy was also being waged by Orthodox Christians at the same time, cooperation between Bosnian

<sup>41</sup> Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine, Zemaljska vlada Sarajevo, 1899, ref. no. 10/663.

<sup>42</sup> Hana Younis, “‘Brez nikoga u dijaru gurbetu.’ Svakodnevni život porodice Bakarević u Istanbulu krajem 19. i početkom 20. stoljeća,” *Prilozi* 45 (2016), 53–4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, 67–8.

<sup>44</sup> After a series of letters in which Esma expressed concern about the political perturbations in the Ottoman Empire over the overthrow of Abdul Hamid II, she reassured her brother in a letter dated May 16, 1909, that the situation had normalized somewhat. Historijski arhiv Sarajevo, Porodica Bakarević, kut. 3, Letter by Esma dated May 16, 1909.

<sup>45</sup> Historijski arhiv Sarajevo, Porodica Bakarević, kut. 3, Letter by Esma dated February 12, 1909.

<sup>46</sup> Robert J. Donia, *Islam pod dvoglavim orlom. Muslimani Bosne i Hercegovine 1878–1914*, 2nd rev. ed., Sarajevo: University Press, 2020, 90–1.

<sup>47</sup> Document no. 6, in *Borba muslimana Bosne i Hercegovine za vjersku i vakufsko-meirifsku autonomiju*, ed. F. Hauptmann, Sarajevo: Arhiv Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine, 1967, 78–80.

emigrants in the Ottoman Empire and Serbia intensified. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that this was only an ad hoc cooperation, for although at that time, the Serbs considered the Porte to be the lesser evil than Austria-Hungary, they viewed Bosnia and Herzegovina as an area that should fall to Belgrade, not Istanbul.<sup>48</sup>

In any case, good relations between Serbs and Turks did not last long – only until 1912, when the so-called Balkan Wars began, in which the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Serbia fought each other.<sup>49</sup> For Bosnian Muslims, it was a real test of how much loyalty to the Porte they had left. Therefore, it may come as a surprise that, according to the official estimates, 135 Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina enlisted in the Ottoman army.<sup>50</sup> However, these figures are definitely underestimated because most of the people who emigrated to fight on the Turkish side were not registered. Nor should we forget about the Bosnian Muslims who had already left for the Ottoman Empire. They served in a separate, specially dedicated regiment. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that the Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina were not particularly interested in fighting for the sultan. The small involvement of Bosnian Muslims in the Balkan Wars was also mentioned by Oskar Potiorek in his correspondence with Leon Biliński.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

The attitude of Bosnian Muslims toward the Porte from the mid-19th century to 1914 was constantly changing. If presented on a graph, it would resemble a sinusoid since the attachment to the sultan was strengthened at some points and completely loosened at others. Nevertheless, the pushing through of the Tanzimat reforms and, above all, the pacification of the Bosnian Beys in 1850 caused the Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who had once been the sultan's "shield," to lose confidence in him. Although, as I mentioned, there were later times when they were closer to Istanbul, the resentment remained. The sultan, as the highest religious authority, lost his prestige. This was especially evident in the Austro-Hungarian period when the Catholic

---

<sup>48</sup> In the late 1890s, some Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina became closer to the Serbian elite. Sonja Dujmović, "O privrednoj saradnji gradskih elita u Bosni i Hercegovini u vrijeme Austro-Ugarske monarhije," *Prilozi* 45 (2016), 91–2. Also, many young Muslims who went to study in Austria began, under the influence of Serbian friends, to identify with the Serbian national idea, which in turn did not gain approval at home. "Izjava muslimanske i pravoslavne omladine," *Behar* 7 (1906), 73–4.

<sup>49</sup> The Balkan Wars is the name of the two armed conflicts that took place in the years 1912–1913 when the armies of the united Balkan states, such as Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, fought against the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>50</sup> Milorad Ekmečić, "Uticaj balkanskih ratova 1912./1913. na društvo u Bosni i Hercegovini," *Marksistička misao* 4 (1985), 416–7.

<sup>51</sup> Document no. 20, in *Persönliche Vorkerkungen*, 227.



emperor took over some of his “functions,” e.g., death in the name of the emperor was supposed to give Muslim soldiers the same profits in the afterlife as death for the sultan.

In addition, changing times meant that the factor integrating Bosnian Muslims with Istanbul – Islam – began to lose its importance in favor of national movements, especially among the younger generation. At the beginning of the 19th century, Muslims in the *vilayet* of Bosnia felt that they were subjects of the sultan, united by one faith – Islam. This was a key factor in their identity, distinguishing them from Catholics or Orthodox Christians. Later, territorial affiliation gained importance, as reflected in the slogans of autonomy articulated during the rebellion of Husein-kapetan Gradašćević. By the end of the century, the situation had changed and identity was no longer determined solely by religion or place of origin but also by other factors, such as language or a sense of cultural proximity to the Serbian or Croatian people. There was also a sense of national separateness (Bosnianness), which, however, did not manage to develop on a par with the Croatian or Serbian national movement until the outbreak of World War I. Besides, many Muslims rejected Bosnianness as a project that harmed rather than helped Muslims.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, only the uneducated strata, as well as some members of the military and conservative landowners, remained oriented toward Istanbul.

## References

### *Archives*

Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine  
Zemaljska vlada Sarajevo  
Historijski arhiv Sarajevo  
Porodica Bakarević  
Safet beg Bašagić

### *Literature*

- Aličić Ahmed S., *Pokret za autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1832. godine*, Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, 1996.
- Andrić Ivo, *Omer Pasha Latas. Marshal to the Sultan*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth, New York: New York Review Books, 2018.
- Andrić Ivo, *Razvoj duhovnog života u Bosni pod uticajem turske vladavine*, Banja Luka–Beograd: Zadužbina Petar Kočić, 2012.
- Bandžović Safet, “Iseljivanje muslimanskog stanovništva iz kneževine Srbije u Bosanski vilajet (1862–1867),” *Znakovi vremena. Časopis za filozofiju, religiju, znanost i društvenu praksu* 12 (2001), 149–71.

<sup>52</sup> Danuta Gibas-Krzak, *Bośnia i Hercegowina. Determinanty dziejów. Pomiędzy Serbami, Chorwatami a supremacją muzułmanów*, Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Jana Długosza, 2016, 93.

- Bašagić Safvet beg, *Kratka uputa u prošlost Bosne i Hercegovine (od g. 1463.–1850.)*, Sarajevo: Vlastita Naklada, 1900.
- Borba muslimana Bosne i Hercegovine za vjersku i vakufsko-mearifsku autonomiju*, ed. F. Hauptmann, Sarajevo: Arhiv Socijalističke Republike Bosne i Hercegovine, 1967.
- “Carigradska (Novopazarska) konvencija,” in Ljubomir Zovko, *Studije iz pravne povijesti Bosne i Hercegovine 1878.–1914.*, Mostar: Pravni fakultet Sveučilista u Mostaru, 2007, 124–6.
- Donia Robert J., *Islam pod dvoglavim orlom. Muslimani Bosne i Hercegovine 1878–1914*, 2nd rev. ed., Sarajevo: University Press, 2020.
- Dujmović Sonja, “O privrednoj saradnji gradskih elita u Bosni i Hercegovini u vrijeme Austro-Ugarske monarhije,” *Prilozi* 45 (2016), 77–96.
- Ekmečić Milorad, “Uticaj balkanskih ratova 1912./1913. na društvo u Bosni i Hercegovini,” *Marksiistička misao* 4 (1985), 399–423.
- Filan Kerima, *Bosna i Hercegovina u spisima Ahmeda Dževdet-paše*, Sarajevo: Connectum, 2017.
- Gibas-Krzak Danuta, *Bośnia i Hercegowina. Determinanty dziejów. Pomiędzy Serbami, Chorwatami a supremacją muzułmanów*, Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Jana Długosza, 2016.
- Grandits Hannes, *Multikonfesionalna Hercegovina. Vlast i lojalnost u kasnoosmanskom društvu*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2014.
- Grandits Hannes, *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia. Conflicting Agencies and Imperial Appropriations*, London–New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Hadžibegović Ilija, *Bosanskohercegovački gradovi na razmeđu 19. i 20. stoljeća*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2004.
- Hadžibegović Ilija, *Postanak radničke klase u Bosni i Hercegovini i njen razvoj do 1914*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1980.
- Hadžić Osman Nuri, *Islam i kultura*, Zagreb: Tisak dioničke tiskare, 1894.
- Hasanagić Senad, *Drugo lice bune Husein-Kapetana Gradaševića*, Brčko: Knjigolubac, 2018.
- Imamović Enver, *Historija bosanske vojske*, Sarajevo: Edicija Bosanski korijeni, 1999.
- Imamović Mustafa, *Historija države i prava Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo: PIKOK, 1999.
- “Izjava muslimanske i pravoslavne omladine,” *Behar* 7 (1906), 73–4.
- Jabłonowski Aleksander, *Pisma Aleksandra Jabłonowskiego*, Vol. 5: *Słowiańszczyzna południowa oraz Wołosza i Albania*, Warszawa: E. Wende i s-ka, 1911.
- Jalimam Salih, “Historijsko-edukativna uloga časopisa ‘Behar’ u jačanju identiteta Bošnjaka,” *Znakovi vremena. Časopis za filozofiju, religiju, znanost i društvenu praksu* 21 (2003), 19–27.
- Kamberović Husnija, *Begovski zemljišni posjedi u Bosni i Hercegovini 1878. do 1918. godine*, Sarajevo: Ibin Sin, 2005.
- Kapetanović-Ljubušak Mehmed beg, *Što misle muhamedanci u Bosni*, Sarajevo: Spindler i Löschner, 1886.
- Kapidžić Hamdija, *Ali-paša Rizvanbegović i njegovo doba*, Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 2001.
- Karčić Fikret, *The Bosniaks and the Challenges of Modernity. Late Ottoman and Habsburg Times*, Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1999.
- Kisić Kolanović Nada, “Ademaga Mešić i hrvatska nacionalna ideja 1895.–1918. godine,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 40 (3) (2008), 1119–40.
- Kreševljaković Hamdija, *Esnafi i obrti u Bosni i Hercegovini (1463–1878)*, Sarajevo: Naučno društvo NR Bosne i Hercegovine, 1961.
- Kreševljaković Hamdija, *Kapetanije u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1980.
- Kreševljaković Hamdija, *Sarajevo u doba okupacije Bosne 1878*, Sarajevo: Rekulturna, 2021.
- Kruševac Todor, *Bosansko-Hercegovački listovi u XIX veku*, Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1978.

- Łątka Jerzy S., *Lew nasz, lew polski. Pasza Iskender (Antoni Iliński)*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Historii i Kultury Turcji, 1996.
- Lis Tomasz J., "Bośniacy przeciwko Imperium Osmańskiemu. Bunty ludności muzułmańskiej w Bośni w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku," *Balkanica Posnaniensia* 28 (2) (2021), 81–97.
- Malcolm Noel, *Bosnia. A Short History*, New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Mandić Mihovil, *Povijest okupacije Bosne i Hercegovine 1878*, Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1910.
- Martić Grga, *Zapamćenja (1829–1878)*, Zagreb: Knjiz, Knjižara Jugoslavenske Akademije, 1906.
- Mulabdić Edhem, *Gajret*, Sarajevo: Risto J. Savić, 1903.
- Palairt Michael, *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914. Evolution Without Development*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Persönliche Vörmerkungen von General Oskar Potiorek über die innerpolitische Lage in Bosnien und der Herzegowina*, ed. Dževad Juzbašić, Zijad Šehić, Sarajevo: ANUBiH, 2015.
- Proganjanje islamskog naroda u Herceg-Bosni*, Novi Sad: Srpska štamparija Svet. Miletića, 1900.
- Radušić Edin, *Bosna i Hercegovina u britanskoj politici od 1857 do 1878 godine. Od branitelja i zaštitnika do tužioca i sudije*, Sarajevo: Institut za Istoriju, 2013.
- Rizvić Muhsin, *Bosansko muslimanska književnost u doba preporoda (1887–1918)*, Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1990.
- Roudometof Victor, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy. The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans*, London: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Šehić Sadik, *Zmaj od Bosne. Husein-kapetan Gradašćević*, Tuzla: Front slobode, 1991.
- Suljkić Hifzija, "Iseljavanje Muslimana iz Užica u Bosnu 1862," *Glasnik Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u SFRJ* 2 (1991), 161–79.
- Younis Hana, *Biti kadija u kršćanskom carstvu*, Sarajevo: Institut za Historiju, 2021.
- Younis Hana, "'Brez nikoga u dijaru gurbetu.' Svakodnevni život porodice Bakarević u Istanbulu krajem 19. i početkom 20. stoljeća," *Prilozi* 45 (2016), 41–76.
- Younis Hana, *Od dućana do pozorišta. Sarajevo trgovačka elita 1851–1878*, Sarajevo: Institut za Historiju, 2016.

## **“The First Foretaste of the True East” – A Polish Reporter in Post-Ottoman Ruse**

*Kamen Rikev*

University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska, Poland

e-mail: [rikev@umcs.pl](mailto:rikev@umcs.pl)

ORCID: 0000-0002-6606-4731

### **Abstract**

The article confronts the urban myth about Ruse as the “most European city” in the Bulgarian lands with the reports from October 1886, published in Antoni Zaleski’s book *Z wycieczki na Wschód. Notatki dziennikarza* (From a trip to the East. A journalist’s notes). The comparison of the Polish observer’s notes with the most persistent elements of this myth reveals diametrically opposite notions about the city’s role in the modernization of Bulgaria during the second half of the 19th century. The key points in the narrative on Ruse as “the city of first things” and “the Gateway to Europe” include the Islahhane grand hotel as “the pearl” of modern Bulgarian accommodation and hospitality facilities; Ruse as a “Little Vienna” because of its architecture; Ruse as an important diplomatic center due to the presence of numerous consulates; the railway from Ruse to Varna as proof of the successful integration of the Bulgarian lands into the European transport system; and social and cultural life in Ruse as evidence of the break with the Oriental lifestyle. The article shows that the city regarded by its inhabitants as a “gateway to the West” was perceived by foreign visitors as a true “gateway to the East.” Zaleski builds his reports on the categories of East and West, European and Ottoman, Bulgarian and Turkish; his portrayal of the city puts it in the frame of an unquestionably Eastern, mixed Turkish-Bulgarian, post-Ottoman reality.

### **Keywords**

Antoni Zaleski, Ruse, Ruschuk, Bulgaria, post-Ottoman, Polish journalist, foreign reporter in the Balkans

In 1887, Polish editor and journalist Antoni Zaleski<sup>1</sup> published his notes from a journey to the Balkans in the book *Z wycieczki na Wschód. Notatki dziennikarza* (From a trip to the East. A journalist's notes).<sup>2</sup> These reports originally appeared in the Warsaw daily newspaper *Słowo*<sup>3</sup> and described the key points (Bucharest, Ruse, Varna, and Constantinople) of a journey that the author had made in October 1886 with two distinguished companions, the renowned writer Henryk Sienkiewicz and painter Kazimierz Pochwalski.<sup>4</sup> Each of them had a different reason for traveling to “the countries that we used to call the East, but which today bear no other name than the Balkan Peninsula.”<sup>5</sup> Zaleski was driven primarily by his professional instinct “to look for what is now and what may happen, instead of what has been.”<sup>6</sup> The author's accounts follow the pattern used by numerous European correspondents covering the Balkans.<sup>7</sup> They contain an overview of the visited places, the meetings and curiosities personally experienced there, along with up-to-date information on the political, economic, and cultural state of the Ottoman Empire and newly-liberated Romania and Bulgaria. Despite the strict adherence to that model, Zaleski's notes provide vivid descriptions of everyday life in the cities he visited, including the Danube town of Ruse, one of the most rapidly developing urban centers of the Principality of Bulgaria.

The aim of this article is to confront the most popular urban mythemes about the city of Ruse (Rousse, the Ottoman Rusçuk) with the information contained in Zaleski's notes from his visit in October 1886. Such a comparison reveals diametrically opposite notions about the city's role in the modernization of Bulgaria during the second half of the 19th century.<sup>8</sup> Most striking is the fact that Zaleski manages to disprove the local opinions about Ruse in just a few paragraphs of his reports (pp. 83–90). In addition, it is worth noting that the Polish observer puts emphasis on the same civilizational landmarks of the city that have served as arguments confirming its status as a modern – and thus opposite to *Ottoman* and typically *Eastern* – place from the 1860s until World War II.

<sup>1</sup> For a biographical note on Zaleski (1858–1895), see *Encyklopedia Warszawy*, ed. Barbara Petrolin-Skowrońska, Warszawa: PWN, 1994, 998.

<sup>2</sup> Antoni Zaleski, *Z wycieczki na Wschód. Notatki dziennikarza*, Warszawa: Nakład Gebethnera i Wolffa, 1887.

<sup>3</sup> From no. 268 (November 19 / December 1, 1886) to no. 48 (February 18 / March 2, 1887).

<sup>4</sup> Zaleski, *Z wycieczki*, 7–8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, 4. All fragments translated from Polish and Bulgarian by the author.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, 8.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed contextualization of travel literature on the Balkans (with a focus on English reporters), see Chapter Four (“Patterns of Perception until 1900”) of Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 89–115.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding his detailed, yet somewhat ironic description of Ruse, Zaleski may be considered a continuator of Austro-Hungarian ethnographer Felix Philipp Kanitz, who first called it “the capital” of the Danube *vilayet* in his book *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan* (1875; see Nikolay Nenov, “Gradovete v „Dunavska B’lgariâ“ prez pogleda na Feliks Kanic [The towns in the ‘Danube Bulgaria’ through the eyes of Felix Kanitz],” *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 14 [2011], 300). Zaleski also refers to the town as the *vilayet*'s capital.

Historians and humanities scholars concentrate on several factors determining Ruse’s unique position among other towns of 19th- and 20th-century Bulgaria. There is a consensus, however, that the turning point in the modernization and Europeanization of the Bulgarian lands was the designation of Ruse as the administrative center of the Empire’s Danube Province (Tur. Tuna Vilayeti) in 1864. The province was established “as a model project for the application of Ottoman Provincial Law Code of 1864,” which introduced “a number of Western-inspired reforms.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, Ruse owed its first steps into modernity to the Ottoman authorities and, above all, to the *vilayet*’s first governor, Midhat Pasha (1864–1868). The liberation from the Empire in 1878 made Ruse the largest and most urbanized city in the Principality of Bulgaria.

In the following decades, Ruse developed a strong urban identity based on the principles of innovation (“the city of first things [in Bulgaria]” – Bulg. градът на първите неща)<sup>10</sup> and Westernization (“the Gateway to Europe” – Bulg. врата към Европа).<sup>11</sup> These two principles quickly formed the foundation of a specific regional mythology that incorporated numerous facts and beliefs into popular narratives about this unique Bulgarian place and its society. Assumptions about Ruse as the country’s “first” and “most” *European, civilized, modern, bourgeois*, and even *aristocratic* city were maintained by its inhabitants throughout the 20th century.<sup>12</sup> The constituent elements, or mythemes, of Ruse’s urban mythology include, among others:

- the city’s Islahhane grand hotel as “the pearl” of modern Bulgarian accommodation and hospitality facilities;<sup>13</sup>
- Ruse as a “Little Vienna” because of its Central European architecture;<sup>14</sup>
- Ruse as an important diplomatic center due to the presence of numerous consulates;<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Rossitsa Gradeva, “Danube Province,” in Gábor Ágoston, Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Facts On File, 2009, 172.

<sup>10</sup> Svetlana Toncheva, *Plošad“t, park“t i keāt v Ruse. Vizualni markeri na pamet* [The square, the park, and the quay in Ruse. Visual markers of memory], Sofia: ROD, 2017, 9–10.

<sup>11</sup> Nikolay Nenov, *Point of View. Rousse. Illustrated History*, Sofia: ROD, 2006, 3. During the communist period, this mytheme was transformed accordingly to the “gates at the crossroads allowing connection with Russia and Romania”; see Petar Velikovski, “Kulturen život v Ruse prez vreme na V“zraždaneto [Cultural life in Ruse during the Revival Period],” *Proceedings of the National Museum – Ruse* 1 (1964), 51.

<sup>12</sup> Compare the study of Ruse’s oral history and attached interviews in *Ruse. Portret na veka* [Ruse. A portrait of the century], ed. Nikolay Nenov, Sofia: ROD, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Teodora Bakardjieva, “Ruse „grad velik i mnogot“rgoven“ ili moderen li e „moderen Rusčuk“ [Rousse, ‘a great and multi-commercial town,’ or is the ‘modern Rouschouk’ really modern],” *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 14 (2011), 343.

<sup>14</sup> Vasil Doykov, Mariana Dimitrova, *Sgradite – evropejsko kulturno nasledstvo na Ruse. Obrazi i istorii* [The buildings – the European cultural heritage of Ruse. Images and stories], Ruse: Avangard Print, 2013, 4–5, 7–8. For a broader context of the transformation of Balkan towns into “little Parises and large Bucharests” in the eyes of European travelers, see the last chapter of Božidar Jezernik’s *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers*, London: Saqui, 2004, 206–33.

<sup>15</sup> Nikolay Nenov, “Gradskiāt mit „K“šata na Kaliopa“ [The urban myth of ‘Kaliopa’s House’],” *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 13 (2008), 11.

- the railway from Ruse to Varna as proof of the successful integration of the Bulgarian lands into the European transport system;<sup>16</sup>
- social and cultural life in Ruse as proof of the break with the Oriental lifestyle.<sup>17</sup>

The topics listed above are directly addressed in Zaleski's overview of the city from 1886. However, if the label of "Bulgaria's most European city" may be regarded as "Ruse's basic myth,"<sup>18</sup> the Polish author's remarks may be interpreted as a concerted demythologization of that notion. Chapter II (*Ruschuk – Varna*) begins with the statement that "we get the first foretaste of the true East only after landing in Ruschuk." In addition, the image of a jovial Bulgarian town is immediately challenged by emphasizing the chaotic mix of soldiers' uniforms, "Turkish fezes," and "Greeks trying to outshout the Bulgarians" (p. 83). Zaleski's first impressions paint a picture of an unexpectedly wild place that has pulled the Western visitor out of his previous comfort zone.

After impressions from the port, the report presents a description of the Islahhane hotel, recommended to the travelers by their distinguished compatriot Antoni Piotrowski<sup>19</sup> as "the very best in Ruschuk" (p. 85). Contrary to local opinions and Zaleski's own initial expectations, his summary is dominated by ironic indulgence:

The hotel itself is completely different from those you see in the West. On the ground floor, there is a huge hall – dark, somewhat dirty, with a balcony, or rather a veranda to the garden. Its walls are decorated with a large oil print of Prince Alexander in full uniform. Above the portrait – festoons in the national colors of Bulgaria. On the first floor, there is a similar hall with another, only slightly larger, portrait of the dethroned Prince; some benches and a piano stand around it. It is a ballroom. So balls are also held in Ruschuk! What a pity that we arrived at a time when Bulgarians were not in the mood for entertainment, for I would have loved to see a Bulgarian ball and dance with the local elegant women. But all is not lost. The entire *beau monde* comes to our hotel's restaurant in the evenings, so I will be able to contemplate them to my heart's content. [...]

We get a room on the first floor, furnished rather decently with Viennese trash, but relatively expensive (8 francs a night). The high prices are caused at the moment by journalistic correspondents, of which there are quite a few, who have set up their headquarters in Islahhane (pp. 85–86).

Zaleski's irony then intensifies in the description of a walk through the town's center when he unloads his frustration with an obvious sense of Western superiority. Firstly, the author declares that it is difficult to even take a step outside without a *dragoman* (interpreter, p. 86), which serves as an introduction to the stark contrast

---

<sup>16</sup> Martin Doykov, "Predimstvata na Ruse kato presečen punkt na evrotransportni koridori no. 7 i 9 [The advantages of Rouse as a point of intersection of the European transport corridors 7 and 9]," *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 14 (2011), 415.

<sup>17</sup> Bakardjieva, "Ruse," 343–6.

<sup>18</sup> Nenov, "Gradskiât mit," 12.

<sup>19</sup> Antoni Piotrowski (1853–1924), Polish painter and illustrator. In 1879 and 1885, he was a correspondent for British and French newspapers in Bulgaria. A volunteer in the Bulgarian army during the Serbo-Bulgarian War, he later continued to work in the Principality, including for the royal court in Sofia.

observed between the two banks of the Danube. Ruse appears to evoke comparisons to Jewish towns in Poland rather than to Vienna:

What a difference from what we saw this morning on the other side of the Danube! There are Turks here at every turn, and the traces of their rule have not been erased by the seven-year reign of Prince Alexander. Everything here is still Turkish, the pavements are vile, there is mud up to the ankles, and every few steps, you see the towers of minarets and such sloppiness everywhere resembling our Jewish towns. There are houses of all shapes and architectural forms. Next to a few decent tenement houses, you see wooden Turkish cottages with characteristic balconies and overhangs. Right next to our hotel stands a beautiful Viennese-style villa of Mr. Stoyanov, brother of the famous Zahari; a large two-story house is being built next to it, but a few steps away and along the entire street, there are many low, wooden, one- or two-story houses, very rundown and shabby. While you can see minarets every now and then, there are no church towers or domes anywhere. This is still a legacy of Turkish times when Christians were not allowed to build temples with bell towers or any other towers taller than minarets. A dozen or so steps from our hotel, there is a church, or rather a Catholic chapel, even with a bishop holding the office of apostolic delegate, but you need to know well where this temple is located; otherwise, it is difficult to find it, as it looks so inconspicuous from the outside. In a word, the former capital of the Danube Vilayet, the residence of the Turkish pasha who ruled all of today's Bulgaria, although still having 30,000 inhabitants, looks strangely inconspicuous and shabby. Its houses look more like temporary barracks than permanent dwellings. There are quite a few shops here, but due to the fact that it is Sunday and, on top of that, election day, almost all of them are closed.

In the whole of Ruschuk, there is only one long, relatively wide, and fairly regular street. It leads from the railway station to a spacious square, completely unpaved, which could pass for a market square since there is a large government building next to it, still called *konak* after the Turks. The building is modern, two-story, almost a palace, quite magnificent, and its Viennese style is in great contrast with the low and collapsing houses that surround the square. [...] In the middle of the square stands a shabby wooden gazebo with a cross. This is the first cross I encountered in Ruschuk, while I have already seen a dozen or so minarets (pp. 86–88).

Although the phrase “Viennese style” appears several times in Zaleski's notes, it does not contain the positive connotations that would allow Ruse to be called “Little Vienna.” Instead, the overall style and spirit of the place automatically evoke its labeling as Turkish, i.e. synonymous with disorder, squalor, and ugliness. Once again, the Polish reporter presents the Balkan world within the frames of Western – Eastern, European – Ottoman categories. This is, of course, in full accord with the foreigners' common tendency to portray Balkan towns as “a copy or even a caricature of western Europe” and places where “everything was borrowed.”<sup>20</sup>

In 1886, Ruse was also far from serving its function as a significant diplomatic center. According to Zaleski, the position held in the highest esteem by the inhabitants throughout the peninsula was not that of a consular official but of a foreign correspondent. It is the latter who provides the locals with the most errands and well-paid opportunities:

<sup>20</sup> Jezernik, *Wild Europe*, 227.



all offices are open to them and, in their own interest, give the requested information as quickly and as accurately as possible. [...] People can sometimes learn more from such a correspondent than from consular agents or *kavases* (bodyguards). [...] they offer chances to earn more in a day than the inhabitants of the entire town do in a week. [...] A correspondent in the East is synonymous with a great lord (pp. 92–93).

Zaleski clearly suggests in this way that there is no point in visiting the city's consulates – one can gather all the news and gossip while chatting with the guests in Islahhane's main hall. In Ruse, "books are difficult to import, except for deliveries through Bucharest, newspapers arrive late" (pp. 171–172). The biggest inconvenience for journalists and diplomatic representatives is the fact that most correspondence is sent from the other side of the Danube, from the Romanian Giurgiu, due to the far worse state of the Bulgarian postal and telegraph services (p. 76).

In a similar fashion, Zaleski is quick to debunk the other two civilizational achievements of modern Ruse. The railway, the first in the lands of the future Principality (built in 1866), is an undisputed accomplishment. Although the Polish group encounters only a few passengers, "the carriages are quite comfortably furnished," and "the conductor speaks French" (p. 174). The landscape from Ruse to Varna, however, is described as depressingly dull; the land is still "hideously cultivated," and the huts are ugly and dirty. Only Turks can be seen in the fields, as Muslims inhabit the whole region up to Dobrudja (p. 173). In summary, the transport line has not produced any visible economic results. Apart from the questionable Europeanization of the city and its surrounding region, Zaleski's notes undermine the very idea of a Bulgarian state populated by ethnic Bulgarians.

As for the social and cultural life in Ruse, the Polish journalist gives a categorically bleak assessment:

Social life does not exist at all in Ruschuk, as it does not exist in the whole of Bulgaria. A Bulgarian is hospitable and, despite the proverbial stinginess, will gladly welcome a traveler into his home, feed him, give him something to drink, and provide accommodation for the night. But he does not crave company at all, he is not in the habit of seeking it, nor does he feel the need for it. Every Bulgarian (I mean here not only peasants but also wealthier people belonging to the intelligentsia) lives for himself, strictly confined to the family circle; they rarely come together, and even then rather in pubs than at home. [...] There are social relations between men but none between ladies. The latter live in seclusion like Turkish women and are rarely visible even to the eyes of their closest friends (pp. 167–168).

[...] There is no such thing [as feasts and public meetings] here. In a city like Ruschuk, where there are, after all, many officers, officials, judges, schoolteachers, wealthy and fairly-well educated merchants, and, finally, consuls and their secretaries, there is no club or meeting place. Everyone lives for themselves, the consuls stick to their circle, and the rest of the men sometimes come to the Islahhane hotel (p. 168).

[...] All Europeans complain enormously about the lack of any intellectual resources in Bulgarian cities and about the extremely boring life. The theater is out of the question, even in Sofia (p. 171).

A fellow Pole, who lives permanently in Ruse, tells Zaleski that there are "enormous difficulties in bringing up children" (p. 172) and sums up the position of Westerners in the city: "We are all getting covered with patina here, cut off from all of Europe" (p. 171).

Zaleski's description of Ruse, which he visited in October 1886, fits into a popular subgenre of Western European travelers' and journalists' reports on the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, many of which covered the Bulgarian lands. Zaleski contributed to the literature on the subject an unconscious yet undeniable opposition to the emerging urban myth of Ruse as “Bulgaria's most European city.” His depiction of post-Ottoman reality leads to the conclusion that what local residents regarded as a “gateway to the West,” foreigners might have perceived as a true “gateway to the East.”

It should also be noted that Zaleski is not consciously ironic and pessimistic about Ruse and the Bulgarian Principality as a whole. He is quick to point out the potential for economic growth, the reasons behind many cultural shortcomings and peculiarities, and the uncorrupted morality of the newly-liberated people. His role of a spontaneous observer of the parliamentary elections gives credence to the information he provides about the country's political system, as well as to his conviction that Bulgarians genuinely want to build an independent and prosperous democratic state. The nascent political life seems to be the point at which the dichotomous categories of East and West, European and Ottoman, Bulgarian and Turkish exhaust their potential as markers of national exoticism. Instead, it suggests the emergence of social phenomena to which continental observers have long been accustomed. In 1886, however, post-Ottoman Ruse is far from resembling a “Little Vienna,” at least in Zaleski's reports.

## References

- Bakardjieva Teodora, “Ruse „grad velik i mnogot”rgoven“ ili moderen li e „moderen Rusčuk“ [Rousse, ‘a great and multi-commercial town,’ or is the ‘modern Rouschouk’ really modern],” *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 14 (2011), 339–47.
- Doykov Martin, “Predimstvata na Ruse kato presečen punkt na evrotransportni koridori no. 7 i 9 [The advantages of Rousse as a point of intersection of the European transport corridors 7 and 9],” *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 14 (2011), 414–8.
- Doykov Vasil, Dimitrova Mariana, *Sgradite – evropejsko kulturno nasledstvo na Ruse. Obrazi i istorii* [The buildings – the European cultural heritage of Ruse. Images and stories], Ruse: Avangard Print, 2013.
- Encyklopedia Warszawy*, ed. Barbara Petrozolin-Skowrońska, Warszawa: PWN, 1994.
- Gradeva Rossitsa, “Danube Province,” in Gábor Ágoston, Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Facts On File, 2009, 172–3.
- Jezernik Božidar, *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers*, London: Saqui, 2004.
- Nenov Nikolay, “Gradovete v „Dunavska B”lgariâ“ prez pogleda na Feliks Kanic [The towns in the ‘Danube Bulgaria’ through the eyes of Felix Kanitz],” *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 14 (2011), 297–302.
- Nenov Nikolay, “Gradskiât mit „K”sata na Kaliopa“ [The urban myth of ‘Kaliopa’s House’],” *Proceedings of the Rousse Regional Museum of History* 13 (2008), 9–18.
- Nenov Nikolay, *Point of View. Rousse. Illustrated History*, Sofia: ROD, 2006.

- Ruse. Portret na veka* [Ruse. A portrait of the century], ed. Nikolay Nenov, Sofia: ROD, 2000.
- Todorova Maria, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Toncheva Svetlana, *Plošad"t, park"t i keât v Ruse. Vizualni markeri na pamet* [The square, the park, and the quay in Ruse. Visual markers of memory], Sofia: ROD, 2017.
- Velikovski Petar, "Kulturen život v Ruse prez vreme na V"zraždaneto [Cultural life in Ruse during the Revival Period]," *Proceedings of the National Museum – Ruse* 1 (1964), 51–82.
- Zaleski Antoni, *Z wycieczki na Wschód. Notatki dziennikarza*, Warszawa: Nakład Gebethnera i Wolffa, 1887.

## **A Study on the Sociocultural Life of the Balkan Peoples as Depicted in Mary Adelaide Walker’s Travel Book *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*<sup>1</sup>**

*Seda Ağırbaş*

Ege University, Turkey

e-mail: [seda.agirbas@ege.edu.tr](mailto:seda.agirbas@ege.edu.tr)

ORCID: 0000-0002-2649-5078

### **Abstract**

Throughout history, the Balkans forming part of the Ottoman Empire have been the focus of attention of many Western travelers as a region inhabited by nations of different ethnic and sectarian backgrounds. In this study, based on Mary Adelaide Walker’s 19th-century book titled *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, the way of life and sociocultural structure of the societies living in the Balkans, as seen through the eyes of a female traveler, will be discussed. In the conclusion, apart from a general summary, the article will shed light on the changing sociocultural life in the Balkans during the time when the traveler was in Macedonia.

### **Keywords**

travelogue, Mary Adelaide Walker, Balkan peoples

### **Introduction**

The Balkans, which had been under the administration of the Ottoman Empire for nearly five hundred years and played an important role throughout their history,

---

<sup>1</sup> This study is a comprehensive analysis of Mary Adelaide Walker’s travel book, which was included in the present author’s doctoral thesis titled *İngiliz Gezgin Mary Adelaide Walker’ın Eserlerinde Osmanlı Dünyası* [The Ottoman world in the works of British traveler Mary Adelaide Walker].

attracted the attention of many Western travelers, who visited them both due to their geographical location and the fact that they were a region inhabited by different ethnic and sectarian nations. These territories were perceived as having no clear borders and being intertwined both geographically and culturally. The travelers' observations led to the emergence of an image of the East.

In his book describing Western approaches to the Orient, Edward Said defines Orientalism as a "complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West."<sup>2</sup> He states that the knowledge produced by the West about the East was produced on a purely political, cultural, and religious basis as an indicator of the West's own power. Galip Çağ adds that the chaotic borders defined as the East in western-centered thought emerged with Orientalism.<sup>3</sup>

Maria Todorova explains that the geographical east of Europe and the part of the world lying to the east of it were perceived in the West as places characterized by economic backwardness, industrial underdevelopment, and lack of advanced social relations typical of the developed capitalist West.<sup>4</sup> She states that the Balkans became the East of the world for the West from the 18th century onward when Western travelers discovered the region as a new area, and it was then that the idea of Balkanism emerged, matching the perception of the East present in Orientalism.

Slovenian anthropologist Božidar Jezernik has written the most comprehensive study on the changing face of the Balkans as seen through travelers' eyes. In *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* (2004), he shows how in the works of the Western travelers who visited the Balkans, geographical observations and even those about the natural environment, vegetation, and local elements were often conveyed in the form of prejudiced and subjective descriptions.<sup>5</sup> The point of view of these travelers was also described in the chapter in Todorova's book entitled "The Discovery of the Balkans,"<sup>6</sup> which was another source used in the present study.

### Travelogues as Sources of Information about Foreign Countries

This study deals with the social and cultural life of the Balkans described by a woman traveler rather than the political history of the region. Travel books, which help to understand history and envisage past events, are important sources of information

<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Random House, 2014, 40 (first published 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Galip Çağ, "Batılı Seyyahların Gözünde Karanlık Bir Orman. Balkanlar [An obscure wilderness in the eyes of Western travelers. The Balkans]," *Türk Yurdu Dergisi* 102 (310) (2013), 1–21, <https://www.turkyurdu.com.tr/yazar-yazi.php?id=789> [accessed November 19, 2022].

<sup>4</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers*, London: Saqui, 2004, 30–9.

<sup>6</sup> Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 62–88.

about foreign countries. They are also valuable documents that present the visited places from different perspectives: their scenery and natural features from the geographical point of view; their wars and treaties from the historical point of view; their social life, religious beliefs, ethnic structure, and population from the sociological point of view; and their customs and traditions, archeological history, and monuments from the cultural point of view.

One of the important travelers who conveyed their impressions in a detailed and literary way was Evliya Çelebi. This 17th-century Ottoman explorer embodied all the characteristics of his era by living, traveling, and feeling; in his book *Seyahatname*, he shed light on the sociocultural life in the Balkans. Travel literature, which gradually developed in the centuries following his death, was continuously enriched by the accounts of travelers interested in different places and cultures. The culture of travel led to the publication of many works written in the 19th century by female travelers, one of whom was Mary Adelaide Walker. She traveled first to Istanbul, Bursa, İzmit, and Ankara in Anatolia; then to Lesvos and Crete; then to Albania via Macedonia in the Balkans; and finally to Romania, and she described the visited places in detail and even drew some of them.

### **The Image of the Balkans in Mary Adelaide Walker's Travelogue**

*Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, published by Chapman and Hall in London in 1864, was Walker's first travel book. It is a record of her journey to Thessaloniki with her brother, Rev. Charles George Curtis, and from there to the Albanian lakes on the Macedonian border with some friends. Her travelogue, which consists of 14 chapters, contains 12 drawings she made herself.<sup>7</sup> Although it is very comprehensive, also including descriptions of the natural environment, geographical features, and historical and monumental buildings in the cities, this study focuses only on Walker's comments about the social structure and social and cultural values of the Balkan peoples.

After briefly mentioning their departure from Istanbul aboard the *Argonaut*, Walker describes in detail the sunset view of the Bosphorus and the crowds of people on deck. She recounts their arrival in Çanakkale at sunrise and in Kavala in the afternoon, then writes about the architectural monuments of the city and the magnificent view of the coast from the ship sailing close to the shore, and finally about their departure from the city via the Plovdiv Road.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> These sketches were later colored by Hanhart using the lithography technique. Zeynep İnankur, Reina Lewis, Mary Roberts, *Mekanın Poetikası, Mekanın Politikası. Osmanlı İstanbulu ve Britanya Oryantalizmi* [Poetics of space, politics of space. Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism], İstanbul: Pera Müzesi Publishing, 2011, 202.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864, 2.

Having commented briefly on the appearance of various people speaking Turkish, Spanish, Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, and other languages, whom she saw while approaching the pier in Thessaloniki, she states that they left the dirty and smelly quarter and went to a much more airy place away from the city.<sup>9</sup>

Walker goes on to describe one of the important elements of Turkish domestic life, i.e., Ottoman women paying each other visits. During these gatherings, where the most rigorous rules of etiquette applied, guests were offered all kinds of treats and provided with entertainment so that they would feel comfortable and satisfied.<sup>10</sup> In Thessaloniki, Walker got an invitation to the mansion of Governor Hüsni Pasha, where she had the chance to observe the customs and traditions as well as the social life of the Turks. She describes in detail the layout and furnishings of Turkish houses, the custom of entertaining guests, which was an integral part of daily life, and the conversations of Turkish women in the harem. She notes that in certain rooms, there were several windows very close to each other, the lower parts of which were screened with thick lattices, while the upper parts were tightly draped with thick curtains. Referring to a large sofa (*divan*), or rather, a wide mattress placed on a wooden bench, she explains



Fig. 1. *A Morning Call in Albania* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864, inner cover)

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, 32. Also see Meropi Anastassiadou, *Selanik, 1830–1912. Tanzimat Çağında Bir Osmanlı Şehri Selanik*, trans. Işık Ergüden, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2001 (original title: *Salonique, 1830–1912. Une ville ottomane à l'âge des Réformes*), 72–3.

<sup>10</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile* [Family in the Ottoman society], İstanbul: Timaş Publishing, 2009, 18–19.

that the lady of the house sat usually in the corner of the sofa, which was furnished with two or three softer, flat cushions (Fig. 1).<sup>11</sup>

The guests were served sweetmeats on trays and drank coffee from cups in ornamented holders called *zarfs*,<sup>12</sup> which were sometimes decorated with diamonds and precious stones. Walker emphasizes that the lady of the house personally offered the coffee to the visitors or assigned her maid to do it. She notes that the coffee tray held by the servant was covered from the front with a circular piece of sequined satin fabric fringed with silver and that another servant was carrying a silver vessel like the censer in churches, in which was a small coffee pot on embers of charcoal (Fig. 2).<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 2. Untitled (After Emelia Bithynia Hornby, *Constantinople During the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley, 1863, inner cover)

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 69. Also see Mary Adelaide Walker, *Eastern Life and Scenery with Excursions into Asia Minor, Mytilene, Crete and Roumania*, Vol. 2, London: Chapman and Hall, 1886, 50.

<sup>12</sup> “‘Zarfs’ are elegant containers, with carved patterns made of gold or silver, enameled or jewel inlaid, in which handle-less coffee cups are placed so as not to burn the hand.” Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri* [Ottoman customs, ceremonies, and traditions], ed. Kazım Arısan, Duygu Arısan Günay, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 1995, 211.

<sup>13</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 71–3.



The traveler also presents the women of the harem, their appearance, clothes, and the topics of conversation they discussed.<sup>14</sup> Referring to the fact that the customs were governed by rules, she says that the degree of respect shown to the guests demonstrated how much they were valued (Fig. 3).<sup>15</sup>



Fig. 3. Untitled (After Emelia Bithynia Hornby, *Constantinople During the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley, 1863, 320–1)

On her way to Monastir, Walker met a Bulgarian bride and groom whom she persuaded to let her draw them. The bride, wearing elaborate clothes, carried on her head many coins tightly strung together, which formed a kind of crown; long strings made of the same material, interspersed with colored glass beads and other ornaments, hung in loose festoons under her chin (Fig. 4). The groom also had very colorful flowers on his head and resembled, from a distance, American Indians with their plumes.<sup>16</sup>

Walker also describes other people she saw on the road and strings of camels carrying loads that she passed.<sup>17</sup> Upon reaching Monastir, she was received at the bishop's house and encountered women who wore skull caps that looked like inverted cups. Made of embossed silver, they had painted handkerchiefs wrapped around the edge and were decorated with gold and silver coins; a large gold coin often dangled in

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 74.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, 73. See also Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Kültürü ve Gündelik Yaşam Ortaçağdan Yirminci Yüzyıla*, trans. Elif Kılıç, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2011 (original title: *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich*), 136–7.

<sup>16</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 80–2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, 88–9.

the middle of the forehead. Walker notes that they were hosted in a friendly manner and that the service was conducted by priests, who wore long black robes with wide sleeves and brimless hats made of black cloth.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 4. *A Bulgarian Bride* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

Later, she had the opportunity to draw a picture of a group of *cavasses* (Turkish police officers) and servants chatting in the courtyard. They were very colorfully dressed, e.g., one Albanian wore a pink jacket, light blue sleeves, a scarlet fez and sash, and a white fustanelle (pleated skirt), while a Gypsy was dressed in a brown jacket braided with black and sleeves hanging loose behind and a rose-colored cotton shirt

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, 103. See also Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, comp. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Vol. V.8, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Publishing, 2011, 633.

underneath. He also had an old Bedouin-style headscarf fastened on with a string and smoked a long pipe while chatting with a young Albanian, who wore a bright yellow waistcoat and a pink cap with blue tassels. Two others wore gold-embroidered lilac and scarlet jackets with blue and yellow silk sleeves, red caps, blue tassels, and shiny cartouche boxes of embossed silver attached to the belt at the back.<sup>19</sup>

During her stay in Vodena (Edessa), Walker observed that local women wore similar silver skull caps as those of Yenice. She recalls crossing a stone bridge just outside the city and enjoying a feast in the shade of nice plane and chestnut trees by a clear, fast-flowing stream (Fig. 5). Apart from the food eaten by her and her friends, she also describes the people scattered in groups on the grass. The coffeemakers served those sitting on the ground by running around with hookah hoses, small coffee cups, and pieces of coal held with small tongs. The gaily-dressed grooms walked the horses up and down, and local musicians entertained the audience. The Turks, on the other hand, who looked much more serious, sat in the shade lazily smoking their hookahs while cheerful children played around. Large mats with carpets and padded quilts on them had been spread on the ground, and a lamb that had been turning slowly on a large spit under the trees was brought forward by two men and cut into small pieces. Walker notes that stuffed and roasted lamb is a common “gala dish” all around Albania and that part of Turkey and proceeds to inform her readers about the preparation of the food. First,

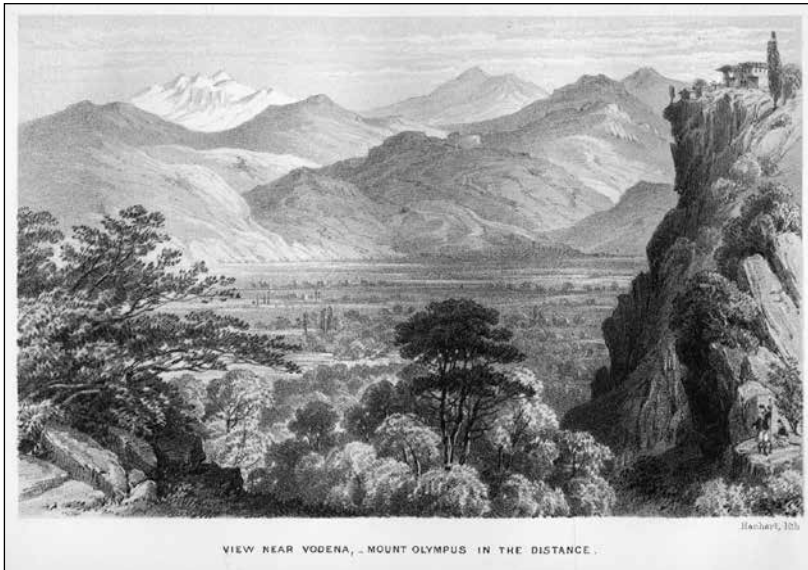


Fig. 5. *View near Vodena [Edessa]. Mount Olympus in the Distance* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

<sup>19</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 104–5.

the entrails were removed, then twisted around long sticks and slightly roasted – it was called *kokoreç* in that region and considered a delicious food by the local people.<sup>20</sup>

Upon arriving in Voden, Walker was received by the Archbishop of the Greek Church. She states that the clergyman's demeanor was easy, dignified, and courteous and refers to his personal appearance by saying that he had a stately figure set off by his flowing violet robe, which was an indication of his position, and that he had strongly-marked, regular Grecian features and a long black beard as well as bright black eyes. A sumptuous supper had been prepared for them, consisting of fresh fish caught in nearby streams, fowls cooked in different ways, all kinds of stewed and roasted lamb, vegetables, creamy milk with rice, and yogurt, which was widely consumed in the East. Walker informs the reader about other Greek traditions by stating that the best wines of the country and delicious bread, as well as peaches from the archbishop's garden and grapes from the slopes of the surrounding mountains, were on the table.<sup>21</sup>

Later, the author gives a lot of detailed information about the cultural significance of Monastir. She notes that it is famous for its filigree work in silver and gold, like many other cities in Albania, and produces such items as *zarfs* for coffee cups, the backs of round hand mirrors, dagger and knife handles, and cigarette holders. As she explains, large clasps and other ornaments made of base silver that are worn by Bulgarian women are sold in a different part of the bazaar or in shops located on a bridge over the river Drachor (Fig. 6).<sup>22</sup>

Walker's travelogue is also a rich source of information about the social life of the Christians and their traditions. She describes the wedding ceremony in the family of a wealthy Wallachian merchant in Monastir, the customs observed during the festivities, the clothing of the bride and groom, the musical entertainment, and the bride's dowry. Three days before the wedding, at ten o'clock at night, the bride-to-be was led by her friends, accompanied by music, to visit three fountains in the vicinity and drink water from them. And on the day before the ceremony, the guests gathered at the bride's house and were served sweetmeats and sherbet.<sup>23</sup> Walker notes that the dark-colored silk dress in an old-fashioned French style did not look like a wedding dress.<sup>24</sup> Then she describes the bride's departure to the groom's house. According to Wallachian customs, the solemn procession consisted of the bride's friends carrying paper lanterns and was accompanied by melancholy music. Upon arriving at their destination, the groom's mother first came forward and said something to the sad bride, kissing her and putting two lighted candles in her hands. A white sheet had been spread at the doorway for the bride to cross, and the mother brought forward a flat cake (a symbol of abundance),

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, 118–9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, 110–1.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, 140.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 141.

<sup>24</sup> See also Angela Jianu, "Women, Fashion, and Europeanization. The Romanian Principalities, 1750–1830," in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans. Gender, Culture and History*, ed. Amila Buturović, Irvin Cemil Schick, London: I. B. Tauris, 2007, 205.

which she held on the bride's head for a moment while she fed her some sugar from a saucer. Walker describes that as soon as the bride entered her room, she drew a cross on the wall with honey and tapped her head slightly against it three times. The bride then stayed in her new home all night, guarded by two old women, and the wedding ceremony was held the next day.<sup>25</sup>



Fig. 6. *Bridge over the Drachor, Monastir* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

Afterward, Walker describes the market day in Monastir, which fell on Mondays. The bazaars were spacious and always crowded and well stocked. The women from the surrounding villages brought their products to sell in two big goat's-hair sacks, carried on a strap, one hanging in front and the other behind. Walker depicts the behavior, clothing, and appearance of the Bulgarian women she met in the bazaar in a remarkably detailed way. Their clothes were made of strong and very elegant fabric but lacked style. They consisted of an undergarment of thick white wool or cotton embroidered with red and black patterns; the same patterns appeared on the wide, open sleeves, around the border, and up the back. Over this, the women wore a slightly shorter petticoat embroidered with a similar ornament and a very large, half-a-meter-wide belt made of goat hair around the waist. An apron made of red and black material woven like a carpet worn over this wrap and a sleeveless pelisse of thick dark fabric completed this costume. Walker mentions that the women also wore a white turban embroidered like the rest of their clothes, with one end wound around the head and the other end hanging from the back to the heels (Fig. 7). In contrast, the Turkish women in Monastir

<sup>25</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 143–4.

covered their heads with white veils called *yaşmak*, and their cloaks were more like the coats worn by the Jews of Hamburg than the long chador used in Istanbul. Jewish women, on the other hand, wore very complicated turbans on their heads.<sup>26</sup>

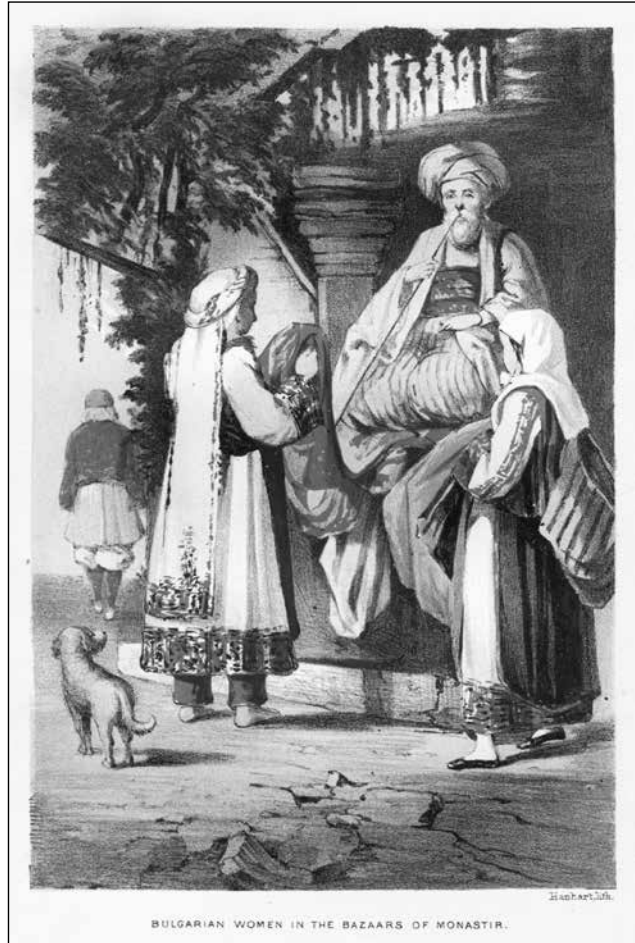


Fig. 7. *Bulgarian Women in the Bazaars of Monastir* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

While staying at a priest's house in the village of Bukovo, Walker had the opportunity to sketch the Bulgarian peasants that she saw from the large balcony of the cottage. Apart from drawing an impressive portrait of a young Bulgarian girl, she also writes that her apron and socks were red, as was the embroidery of her petticoat, and the belt on her waist was decorated with two buckles made of wrought metal. She wore

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, 144–6. See also Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Kültürü*, 136–7.

a broad crown 15–20 cm high, made of coins tightly strung together, and ornaments made of such coins falling to her breasts.<sup>27</sup>

Walker gives a very interesting account of the customs and traditions of the Albanians, which she learned before leaving Monastir.<sup>28</sup> She also describes the Albanians whom she saw in Ohrid:

The town seemed filled with Albanians, many in the splendid Ghegue costume, which, in addition to the brilliant gold-embroidered jacket, and leggings worn by most of the other Albanian tribes, displays a long pelisse of carmine-coloured cloth, reaching nearly to the feet behind, and open in front to exhibit the white fustanelle common to the whole race.<sup>29</sup>

After mentioning the historical and cultural buildings of the city of Struga, Walker focuses on a school there and conveys her impressions of it in detail. The school building stood next to the church, and there were two hundred students in total, thirty of whom were girls. She mentions that older girls came to school wearing veils that covered their mouths and half of their faces, that the children sang a hymn in praise of the Sultan after marching around the classroom, and then made a low bow and crossed themselves, guided by a ringing bell. She notes that almost all the students were Albanians dressed in dirty white linen clothes.<sup>30</sup>

Two-handed water jars resembling Etruscan vases that were made in the potteries on the banks of the river in Struga drew Walker's attention. She states that those ceramic products and filigree craftsmanship constituted the main industry of this small Albanian village. The principal source of income for the inhabitants of Ohrid, on the other hand, was dressing furs for the caftans that were commonly worn by both men and women all over Turkey. The skins came from Leipzig, and the coats made of heavy fabrics and lined with fur were worn on official occasions in all seasons regardless of the temperature.<sup>31</sup>

In Ohrid, Walker was invited to the mansion of the pasha, the top official in the city, and she relates the visit to the harem and the sincerity shown to her by the hosts, as well as their customs. She describes the lady of the house as beautiful but old, with a fair complexion, blue eyes, and light brown hair cut short in front. She had a long plaited tress hanging down her shoulders, and her brow was covered with little rosebuds attached to a muslin handkerchief on her head. She wore a pearl necklace as well as a few strings of coins, and her fingertips were hennaed. Her wide *shalvar* (trousers) and *entari* (robe) were made of light-colored silk fabric with gold stripes (Fig. 8).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 154–6.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 161.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 188. See also Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, 717.

<sup>30</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 197–8. See also Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, 715.

<sup>31</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 199.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, 201–3. See also Sevgi Gürtuna, *Osmanlı Kadın Giysisi* [Ottoman women's clothing], Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999, 4–5.



Fig. 8. Untitled (After Emelia Bithynia Hornby, *Constantinople During the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley, 1863, 244–5)

Walker then describes in great detail the other ladies who were guests in the harem. An Albanian Muslim woman entered the room in a black cloak, under which she wore a chemisette of striped gauze and a black velvet waistcoat embroidered with gold galloon and with a row of gold buttons hanging down the sides. She also had a jacket of purple silk with sleeves of peculiar shape, again embroidered with gold, that tapered towards the wrist. The lady's *shalvar* of white striped muslin was also embroidered in gold, and her attire included as well a sleeveless fur coat of red velvet that reached to the feet. She had with her a little girl, who wore a red velvet jacket with hanging sleeves. Walker comments that it complemented her mother's magnificent costume and that the style of children's clothing was no different from that of adults.<sup>33</sup>

Later on, the traveler recounts what she has learned about local marriage customs. According to a well-established tradition, especially among Greeks, after the death of the father, the eldest son had to take over the management and responsibility of the entire family. He had to provide for the livelihood of his mother and sisters, pay his sisters' dowry, and sometimes even take care of his younger brothers.<sup>34</sup>

Having reached the densely-populated Korçë Plain, which was full of villages, Walker focuses on describing the goods sold in the bazaars she visited and those who produced them. She mentions that the only things worthy of note were red sandals, rough slippers, and splendid dresses of Albanian ladies with arabesque patterns braided with gold.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 203–5. See also Walker, *Eastern Life*, Vol. 1, 102.

<sup>34</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 231.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 244.



She moves on to give her impressions of Bilisht, considered by some to be the border village of Albania, which was mostly inhabited by Bulgarians. Walker recounts in detail the dinner in the manager's mansion where she stayed. The guests were served soup, fish, chicken, and many stewed vegetables, as well as pancakes with clotted cream, baklava, milk pudding, halva, yogurt, and, finally, according to invariable Turkish tradition, rice and a fruit compote. The food was placed, one at a time, on a round plate in the middle of the table, and the guests, with the help of a piece of tough bread, ate in the Oriental style with two fingers and the thumb of their right hand, never using the left one.<sup>36</sup>

During her stay in Kastoria, Walker was hosted by a Greek fur trader. She describes the social and family life of the Greeks, paying close attention to the women's clothing and appearance. Their costumes consisted of an open, high-waisted silk skirt with a huge buckle, a short woolen jacket with gold embroidery, and a red fez with a very long blue silk tassel falling over one shoulder.<sup>37</sup>

As is clear from the narration, the author has a positive opinion of the Turks, despite the conflict between Muslims and Christians. Even though it was impossible to travel in the Balkans without hearing about many acts of unlawful and unpunished outrage, Walker emphasizes that she has seen more kindness in Turkish homes than she expected. She was often welcomed with great hospitality and received close attention. According to her, nothing in the customs and traditions of the harem that she has observed would shock even the most timid and sensitive people. She points out that the domestic relations between husband and wife and parents and children, both in the family of a prominent person that she was acquainted with and especially in middle-class families whose daily lives seemed simple and flawless, would be admirable anywhere.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

Most of the 19th-century Western travelogues describing Balkan history, geography, culture, and social life are dominated by negative prejudices. The travelers' distorted perception of the region, which was under Ottoman rule at the time, was mostly the result of an Orientalist frame of reference and the phenomenon of marginalization. This approach goes much further back, even to the 14th century. Pierre Béhar writes in his article "Türkenbilder, Italienerbilder: Antithesen des Deutschen" that the Turks were called "barbarians" for the first time in the 16th century. He emphasizes that the expression was still used in the 19th century because of the underlying fear of the Turks.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 251–3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, 256–7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 270–1. See also Walker, *Eastern Life*, Vol. 2, 49.

<sup>39</sup> After Gustave Rasch, *XIX. Yüzyılda Avrupa'da Türkler*, trans. Hüseyin Salihoğlu, İstanbul: Yedi-tepe Publishing, 2004 (original title: *Die Türken in Europa*), 7.

In terms of the difference between what the travelers who visited the Balkans looked at and what they saw, one of the most remarkable examples is Gustave Rasch, author of *Die Türken in Europa*, written in 1873. He is known to have been influenced by Orientalist thought in his work, which contains very rich descriptions of Bulgaria, Istanbul, and the lands of Greece.<sup>40</sup>

Another Western traveler who was a prisoner of distorted perception and placed “the other,” Turkishness, and Islam at the center of his assessments is François-René de Chateaubriand. Reflecting on his journey from Paris to Jerusalem between 1806 and 1807, which led through the Peloponnese, Greece, the Aegean Islands, Izmir, Istanbul, and finally the East (Jerusalem), he noted: “These barbarian Muslims and Turks from the East, devoid of Christian virtue, have harmed civilization.”<sup>41</sup>

Historian Galip Çağ points out that the manifestations of the Ottoman urban civilization in the Balkans and the investments made by the Ottomans in the conquered region – although they still exist today – were ignored and disregarded by the travelers, but these prejudiced views of the Balkan cities are easy to refute. It is clearly seen that the travelogues and travel notes, one of the biggest sources of information about the region in civilized Europe at the time, were written from a distance. The researcher also quotes, after Jezernik, the opinion of Sir Edwin Pears confirming this:

Under the Turkish rule, Constantinople has become the most retrograde capital in Europe. Under such rule, Athens, Bucharest, Belgrade, and Sofia, eighty years ago, were mere collections of mud huts, occupied by dejected and poverty-stricken people. Since their inhabitants got rid of Turkish oppression these villages have rapidly grown into towns, have adopted the appliances of civilization [...].<sup>42</sup>

After spending many years in harems, mostly in the Ottoman capital, Mary Adelaide Walker briefly visited Macedonian lands. During her stay there, as in Istanbul, she attracted attention with her moderate approach that differed from the views of other Western travelers. Her narrative makes it clear that diverse peoples such as Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, Wallachians, Albanians, and other communities of different religions and beliefs lived together harmoniously in the Balkans from the 17th century to the mid-19th century. Despite the unpleasant incidents between Muslims and Christians, Walker shows a positive attitude toward the Turks:

Such acts of lawless and unpunished outrage are of common occurrence. It is impossible to travel at all in the provinces without hearing of them continually, and justice compels the mention of them [...]. In several families I have been welcomed with hospitality, and have received many a gentle kindness and delicate attention [...].<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 10–1.

<sup>41</sup> Çağ, “Batılı Seyyahların,” 10.

<sup>42</sup> Jezernik, *Wild Europe*, 206–7.

<sup>43</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 270.

As she states in her other travel book, *Eastern Life and Scenery with Excursions in Asia Minor, Mytilene, Crete and Roumania* (1886), misinformation about Turkey and the Turks was widespread in Europe, which is why she devotes so much attention to describing the daily life of Turkish families and the beauty and sanctity of family ties. She also mentions that it was impossible to form an unbiased and accurate view of family life in a Muslim country, especially in the Balkans with their diverse ethnic identities and religious beliefs. “There are good and bad everywhere, and you may chance to come in contact with a household which is not respectable, in Stamboul, as in London or Paris, or where not? But such exceptions ought not to form an invariable rule.”<sup>44</sup> It is clear from her words that she partially or almost completely got rid of Western prejudices about the Turks and the harem and took a more prudent approach to events. We also see that she regretted the changes in society, e.g., Turkish ladies wanting to adopt a European style and copying the Christian women they most often came in contact with, who were usually Greek and Armenian peddlers, going from house to house and selling dyed headscarves, trimmings, and embroidery at exorbitant prices. Some of the ladies were also given vulgar French novels to read in order to imitate “Frank” life.<sup>45</sup>

In general, as Çağ has pointed out, the Balkans were also affected by the confusion resulting from the complicated relationship between European, Balkan, and Turkish/Ottoman/Muslim elements. The fact that the travelers were for a long time the only source of information about this eastern part of Europe, which had been a foreign land to them for centuries, and that their interpretations of it were far from reality seriously impacted this geographical region. Although the travelogues written about it reflect general impressions, more in-depth research on the sociocultural structure of the Balkans should be conducted.<sup>46</sup>

## References

- Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri* [Ottoman customs, ceremonies, and traditions], ed. Kazım Arısan, Duygu Arısan Günay, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 1995.
- Ağırbaş Seda, *İngiliz Gezgin Mary Adelaide Walker'ın Eserlerinde Osmanlı Dünyası* [The Ottoman world in the works of British traveler Mary Adelaide Walker], doctoral thesis, Ege University Institute of Social Sciences, İzmir, 2019.
- Anastassiadou Meropi, *Selanik, 1830–1912. Tanzimat Çağında Bir Osmanlı Şehri Selanik*, trans. Işık Ergüden, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2001 (original title: *Salonique, 1830–1912. Une ville ottomane à l'âge des Réformes*).

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, 272.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, 272–3.

<sup>46</sup> Galip Çağ, *Balkanlar. Öteki Avrupa'nın Kökleri ve İnşası* [The Balkans. Roots and construction of the other Europe], Ankara: Otorite Publishing, 2022, 307–8.

- Çağ Galip, *Balkanlar: Öteki Avrupa'nın Kökleri ve İnşası* [The Balkans. Roots and construction of the other Europe], Ankara: Otorite Publishing, 2022.
- Çağ Galip, "Batılı Seyyahların Gözünde Karanlık Bir Orman. Balkanlar [An obscure wilderness in the eyes of Western travelers. The Balkans]," *Türk Yurdu Dergisi* 102 (310) (2013), 1–21, <https://www.turkyurdu.com.tr/yazar-yazi.php?id=789> [accessed November 19, 2022].
- Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, comp. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Vol. V.8, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Publishing, 2011.
- Faroqi Suraiya, *Osmanlı Kültürü ve Gündelik Yaşam Ortaçağdan Yirminci Yüzyıla*, trans. Elif Kılıç, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2011 (original title: *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich*).
- Gürtuna Sevgi, *Osmanlı Kadın Giysisi* [Ottoman women's clothing], Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999.
- Hornby Emelia Bithynia, *Constantinople During the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley, 1863.
- İnankur Zeynep, Lewis Reina, Roberts Mary, *Mekanın Poetikası, Mekanın Politikası. Osmanlı İstanbulu ve Britanya Oryantalizmi* [Poetics of space, politics of space. Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism], İstanbul: Pera Müzesi Publishing, 2011.
- Jezernik Božidar, *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers*, London: Saqui, 2004.
- Jianu Angela, "Women, Fashion, and Europeanization. The Romanian Principalities, 1750–1830," in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans. Gender, Culture and History*, ed. Amila Buturović, İrvin Cemil Schick, London: I. B. Tauris, 2007, 201–30.
- Ortaylı İlber, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile* [Family in the Ottoman society], İstanbul: Timaş Publishing, 2009.
- Rasch Gustav, *XIX. Yüzyılda Avrupa'da Türkler*, trans. Hüseyin Salihoğlu, İstanbul: Yeditepe Publishing, 2004 (original title: *Die Türken in Europa*).
- Said Edward W., *Orientalism*, New York: Random House, 2014.
- Todorova Maria, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Walker Mary Adelaide, *Eastern Life and Scenery with Excursions into Asia Minor, Mytilene, Crete and Roumania*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1886.
- Walker Mary Adelaide, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864.

## **The Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1885) as a Balkan Historical Milestone (A Case Study of Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty)**

*Maria Pandevska*

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, The Republic of North Macedonia

e-mail: mariamanol@hotmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-4165-9325

### **Abstract**

The historical issue of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1885) is examined as a significant phase in the social and political development of parts of Southeastern Europe connected with the territorial withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire. Through a brief presentation of the crisis' main events, a more extended periodization of its stages is offered when analyzing this complex historical process. Based on the analysis of Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty (1878) and its (non)implementation, the consequences for the further historical development of Ottoman Macedonia are discussed.

### **Keywords**

Ottoman Empire, Great European Powers, Ottoman Balkan, Great Eastern Crisis, Treaty of Berlin, Article XXIII, Ottoman Macedonia

### **Introduction**

In the history of the European 19th century, the period of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1885) included many events that marked another stage in the resolution of the so-called “Eastern Question” – the question of the survival of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. The diplomatic activity, wars, uprisings, and insurrections that took place in Southeastern Europe in a short time, one after the other, competing and intertwining, eventually resulted in major territorial changes in the political geography of the Balkan

region. The Ottoman Empire, being on the defensive both on the battlefield and in the diplomatic arena, slowly but surely withdrew from most of its European dominions. The Sublime Porte's attempts to consolidate the internal situation through reforms did not achieve the desired effect. The large Ottoman territory faced economic and political collapse. On top of that, the central authority was unable to guarantee the security of life and property of the Christians living in its European provinces. On the one hand, the Empire was constrained by the semi-colonial status of its European creditors and the lack of economic potential. On the other hand, the outdated semi-feudal social system, which was characterized by the lack of any democratic freedoms and burdened with religious dichotomy, was in irreconcilable conflict with the aspirations for equality of most of its subjects.<sup>1</sup> The millet system, which had provided some balance to this duality within the Empire (division into the Muslim millet and other millets),<sup>2</sup> began to withdraw under the impetus of the new social phenomena of the nation and nationalisms. The Crimean War had divided the Concert of Europe into opposing blocks, after an extended period of peace. Even so, the European Great Powers, signatory states of the Treaty of Paris, still agreed only on one issue – that collective approval was necessary for changing borders and creating new independent states. In the age of imperialism, there were increasingly egoistic and aggressive power politics.<sup>3</sup>

This strong position seemed attractive to the European Powers in terms of conquering new colonies and also regarding the territories of the “Sick Man of the Bosphorus.” However, these very empires (including the Ottoman Empire), being large multi-cultural realms, could no longer satisfy the needs of a part of their populations, and before the onset of national strategies and actions of the 19th and 20th centuries, the domino effect of their destruction was initiated.

The first diplomatic survey after the start of the Great Eastern Crisis showed Imperial Russia that, unlike at the time of the Crimean War (1855–1856), the contradictions between its Western rivals were glaring, making it impossible for them to form a unified anti-Russian coalition. Russia sought to take advantage of the crisis to expand and increase its influence over the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. It wanted to spread its hegemony in the Balkan region not through the territorial expansion of its borders but primarily through the formation (or expansion) of Slavic Balkan states which would act as its satellites. The Austro-Hungarian Empire played a significant part in this European crisis. It could achieve its aspiration to expand toward the Gulf

---

<sup>1</sup> Manol Pandevski, “Položbata na Makedonija vo osmanskata imperija kon krajot na XIX i početokot na XX vek,” in *Makedonskoto osloboditelno delo vo XIX i XX vek*, Vol. 5: *Projavi, relaciji, likovi*, Skopje: Mislja, 1986, 7–29; Ilber Ortajli, *Najdolgiot vek na Imperijata*, Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija, Sojuz na turskite nevladini organizacii vo Republika Makedonija, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, “*Millets* and Nationality. The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, Vol. 1, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982, 141–70.

<sup>3</sup> Mari-Žanin Čalić, *Jugoistočna Evropa. Globalna istorija*, trans. Ranka Gašić, Sarajevo: UMHIS, 2020, 286.

of Thessaloniki only by conquering the Ottoman Balkan heritage. However, it tried to fulfill these territorial aspirations gradually – by taking the Balkan territories away from the Sultan step by step. Guided by these strategic plans, the Dual Monarchy was unwilling to allow the formation of new Balkan states or the strengthening of existing ones. The British pro-Ottoman policy played a very important role in these diplomatic games at someone else's expense. By pushing the Ottoman Empire toward war with Imperial Russia, the British Cabinet wanted to take advantage of the future military weakening of both empires for its political and territorial expansion. Germany also made its mark in the conflict by supporting the stances and aspirations of Austria-Hungary and Great Britain. The other European powers, France<sup>4</sup> and Italy, remained on the sidelines of the key political currents at that time regarding these international matters. The small Balkan states (Romania, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro) were treated more as objects than subjects in the Powers' resolution of the existing crisis.

### The Periodization of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1885)

In a comprehensive study of the complex historiographical issue known as the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1885),<sup>5</sup> the internal rhythm of specific historical events can be perceived, among other things, in terms of their categorization into four interrelated and conditioned stages of development. The uprising in Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina in the summer of 1875 marks the starting point of the **first stage** of this great European crisis: the stage of uprisings and insurrections of Christians in the Ottoman Empire (August 1875 – May 1876). The inability of the Ottoman army to suppress the rebellion at the outset led to a tense political atmosphere in the Balkan provinces of the Empire. Seeking to prevent the spread of the rebellious spirit, the Sublime Porte implemented the practice of mass arming of the Muslim population. In this way, it ensured, following its internal logic, that the legal defenselessness of all Christians in the troubling times reached its peak. The Ottoman authorities believed that the fanaticism and mass arming of the Muslims would be a serious factor and force that would help them to overcome the crisis before it reached larger proportions and could not be easily managed. However, this led to an escalation of the crisis,<sup>6</sup> as confirmed by the bloody event in

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 316.

<sup>5</sup> The historiography which deals with the issue of the so-called “Eastern Question” accepts the date of the Berlin Congress (1878) as the end of the Great Eastern Crisis. All activities and historical events that are directly related to the (non)implementation of the Treaty of Berlin are therefore disregarded. Also ignored are the historical events in the Balkan territories affected by its provisions. The proposed periodization is an attempt to overcome this historiographical problem and complements the Macedonian historiography as well. Krste Bitovski, *Makedonija vo vremeto na Golemata istočna kriza (1875–1881)*, Skopje: INI, 1982; *War and Diplomacy. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz, Peter Sluglett, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Bitovski, *Makedonija*, 28–37.

Ottoman Macedonia in May 1876: the assassination of the German and French consuls in Thessaloniki by an inflamed and fanatical Muslim mob. This incident was seen as an unprecedented attack on the diplomatic immunity of the European representatives in the Empire and attracted the attention of the European public. Further events began to occur one after another at breakneck speed. In April 1876, the Christian population in Ottoman Bulgaria raised an uprising. And while the European powers twice failed to resolve the conflict between the Bosnian-Herzegovinian rebels and the Sublime Porte at the other end of the Ottoman Balkan region, the latter brutally quelled the Bulgarian uprising.

These attempts at repression and the actions of the Ottomans against the rebels and uprisings were the direct cause of the emergence of the **second stage** of the Crisis, characterized by the increased diplomatic activity of all interested European Powers (May 1876 – April 1877). Under the guise of “concern” for the lives and rights of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, the Powers were preparing to divide their spheres of influence as well as the Sultan’s territories. In this way, under the pressure of the circumstances, the so-called Berlin Memorandum was adopted at the meeting of the ministers of Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary (Berlin, May 1876). The agreement sought to implement reforms in the Ottoman Empire that would improve the position of its Christian population. The difficult political situation of the Ottoman Empire after the uprisings and the incident in Thessaloniki actually led to the legalization of the right of foreign interference in its internal affairs. All this was undoubtedly reinforced by its semi-colonial status and the bankruptcy of the state in the autumn of 1875. The outbreak of the crisis led to the dethronement of Sultan Abdülaziz and the establishment of a new pro-British government. Nonetheless, the crisis provided the opportunity for all involved parties (the European Powers as well as the small Balkan states) to pursue their mutually conflicting territorial aspirations. Therefore, under the pressure of public opinion, which insisted on their so-called historical right over the territories belonging to the Ottoman Empire, Serbia and Montenegro embarked in the summer of 1876 on a poorly prepared military adventure against the Ottomans. Austria-Hungary and Russia realized that they had to overcome their differences and demarcate their spheres of influence and territorial claims to the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. This resulted in a meeting in Reichstadt (1876) between Emperor Franz Joseph and Tsar Alexander II. The fact that no formal agreement was signed and that there exist two slightly different versions of the records from this meeting shows the deep disagreement between both parties about the ways of dealing with the crisis.<sup>7</sup> The last more serious diplomatic attempt to resolve it peacefully was the proposal for an international conference that was to

---

<sup>7</sup> One of the points on which Austria-Hungary and Russia agreed was that which foresaw the possibility of an eventual Ottoman victory in the ongoing war. Both sides agreed that in such a case, they would demand that the Sublime Porte restore the status quo on the borders from before the war. Therefore, in the autumn of 1876, at a time when the Serbian military forces were in a critical position, Russia issued an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire and brokered a truce with Serbia and Montenegro. Manol Pandevski, “Makedonija vo megunarodnite spogodbi i dogovori od vremeto na istočnata kriza,” in *Makedonskoto osloboditelno delo vo XIX i XX vek*, Vol. 5: *Projavi, relacii, likovi*, Skopje: Mislja, 1986, 155–85.



come up with possible solutions to neutralize all the Balkan problems. This proposal resulted in the so-called Constantinople Ambassadors' Conference (December 1876 – January 1877). It was then that the projects for peace between the Empire and Serbia and Montenegro were designed, as well as the projects for reforms in Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Macedonia. However, the Sublime Porte, secretly incited by the promise of the British Cabinet, refused the proposals and pompously announced the introduction of the first civil constitution in the Ottoman Empire. The reforms were unnecessary because, ostensibly, a parliamentary system of government was being implemented in the Empire. This behavior of the Ottomans burned down all the bridges to resolving the crisis in a diplomatic way. Nevertheless, even before the beginning of its military campaign, Russia wanted diplomatic security and therefore concluded the secret Budapest Convention with Austria-Hungary (1877). In this way, the former country secured the neutrality of the latter. Even though Russia had been preparing to start a war with the Ottoman Empire, it had never stopped looking for ways to avoid it, as evidenced by the signing of the so-called London Protocol. However, this document, which was quite moderate in its demands, was rejected by the Sultan in April 1877. It became clear that war was inevitable.

The **third stage** of the Great Eastern Crisis – the military resolution of the crisis (April 1877 – July 1878) – began with the Russian military campaign in the Balkans. Serbia and Montenegro again joined this latest Russo-Ottoman war.<sup>8</sup> In June 1877, the Russian army entered the territory of Ottoman Bulgaria. The Sultan's army, unable to defend its positions, had to withdraw. The principal Russian operational plan envisaged crossing the Balkan Mountains (Stara Planina) and advancing toward Edirne and Istanbul. After months of bloody battles on almost the entire Russo-Ottoman battlefield, especially at the Shipka Pass (Shipchenski Prohod), in the first days of 1878, the Russian troops together with the voluntary and Opalchenie units entered Sofia.<sup>9</sup> After that, one part of the Russian army continued to pursue the demoralized Ottoman troops in the direction of Tatar-Pazardzhik and Plovdiv. But with the exception of a last more organized resistance by the Ottoman army to defend Plovdiv, the city was surrendered in mid-January 1878. After this defeat, Edirne surrendered virtually without a fight, and the Russian army

---

<sup>8</sup> Russia was prepared to start the war. Nonetheless, on the one hand, the clauses of the Budapest Convention (in the event of Russian victory) limited in advance the territorial expansion of its influence over the central and western Balkan regions. On the other hand, the possibility of the formation of one large compact Slavic or other state was excluded. With the Convention, Austria-Hungary pledged its neutrality in return for not only Russia's consent to its occupation of the Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina but also guarantees for the expansion of its influence in the Balkan Peninsula. I. V. Koz'menko, *Sbornik dogovorov Rossii s drugimi gosudarstvami 1856–1817*, Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo političeskoj literatury, 1952, 144–55.

<sup>9</sup> This war is usually known as the “Russo-Turkish war.” This term stems from the historical sources and documents from that period. At present, however, it is necessary to distinguish between the terms “Ottoman Empire” and “Turkey,” i.e., the modern Turkish state. Since Imperial Russia started the war, it is most adequate to use the term “Russo-Ottoman” war.

reached the Istanbul suburb and summer resort of San Stefano on the Sea of Marmara. On January 31, 1878, an armistice was concluded in Edirne after the capitulation of the Ottoman army. At the same time, in those January days, the remaining units of the Russian army, after entering Sofia, headed for Kyustendil. The Russian troops had entered the city twice and controlled it for just one day before the signing of the truce in Edirne. On this western front, a demarcation line would initially be formed and then a state border between the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Bulgaria. In this way, by reaching Kyustendil, the Russian army actually reached the eastern borders of Ottoman Macedonia.<sup>10</sup>

When the Principality of Serbia re-entered the war on December 1, 1877, it acted within the framework of the global Russian operational plan in its initial phase that was to play out in Ottoman Bulgaria. However, the plan of the Russian command to advance in the direction of Istanbul incited the Serbian army, after the fall of Slivnica, to act independently on the territory of Ottoman South Serbia. The Serbian regular units, supported by the strongly developed insurgent movement of the Serbian Slavic population, succeeded in entering Niš, Leskovac, Vranje, and the surrounding towns in a short time. Before the truce in Edirne, the Serbian army also reached the northern borders of Ottoman Macedonia. On the other hand, the Montenegrins fought fiercely along the borders of Ottoman Herzegovina and Albania. Between September 1877 and January 1878, they managed to enter the towns of Nikšić, Bar, Ulcinj, Grmožur, Vranjina, and Lesendro.

The Russo-Ottoman war created a completely new political situation on the Balkan Peninsula. This led to a tightening of Russia's relations with the Western powers. The victories of the Slavic armies and rebels increased the danger of a British-Russian military conflict. In such a tense political situation, the preliminary San Stefano Agreement between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was signed on March 31, 1878.<sup>11</sup> Russian military actions on the territory of Ottoman Bulgaria terminated the Ottoman administration there. However, Russia's Western European rivals insisted on the restoration of Ottoman domination even in South Bulgaria, which had already been taken over by Russian troops. Due to all these reasons, we can agree with the

---

<sup>10</sup> *Osvoboždenie Bolgarii ot tureckogo iga*, Vol. 3, Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1967.

<sup>11</sup> Even though the role of this agreement is considered significant in Bulgarian historiography, education, and journalism, as well as in state politics where it is treated as a source of national pride and is celebrated as a state holiday (which to this very day in European Bulgaria actually carries irredentist segments toward four contemporary Balkan states), the following crucial fact should be taken into account: the construction of a San Stefano entity in the Balkans could only be realized with a full Russian military presence throughout its territory (excluding all of Ottoman Bulgaria up to parts of the western Ottoman provinces of Macedonia and parts of Albania, as well as parts of the Serbian territory). That never happened. On the contrary, at the Congress of Berlin, Ottoman domination was restored in parts of Ottoman Bulgaria where Russian troops had achieved significant military success and brought down the Ottoman regime (for example, South Thrace). Manol Pandevski, *Macedonia and Macedonians in the Eastern Crisis*, Skopje: Macedonian Review Edition, 1978, 130–4.

conclusion that the plan of the Russian Machiavelli – Count Nikolay Ignatyev,<sup>12</sup> known as San Stefano Bulgaria, was just that: a planned preparation for better positions at the congress, which would clearly happen. The San Stefano provisions contradicted the existing agreements and obligations that Russia had made with Austria-Hungary and Great Britain. Their reassessment was only a matter of time.

The published Russian documents from the time of the crisis suggest that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to the treaty out of a need to establish a favorable position for itself in order to be able to negotiate the future of the Ottoman provinces in the Balkans, rather than to show a firm determination to create the projected Bulgarian state for which it lacked power.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, there were, on the one hand, Count Ignatyev's *Realpolitik*, including his shattered Pan-Slavic dreams, Russia's western rivals, and the Ottoman Empire, and on the other hand, the Bulgarians – on the “green table” divided by an artificial line.

The military action was basically over, and all activities focused on the upcoming international congress. The outcome of the Berlin Congress (June 13 to July 13, 1878) was a compromise that satisfied all parties involved in this phase of the conflict. Of course, the aspirations of the Powers had to be satisfied first at the expense of the aspirations and fate of the small Balkan states and their populations.<sup>14</sup> Thus ended the third stage of the Great Eastern Crisis, and the Great European Powers believed the trouble to be over. However, the **fourth stage** (July 1878 – November 1885) of the crisis in the Balkans manifested itself in the resistance of the small nations against the decisions made in Berlin. The major territorial changes of the state borders in the Balkan Peninsula did not mark the end of the complex and charged political situation in the region. The riots, uprisings, and ultimately another brief Serbo-Bulgarian war (1885) that took place in these territories in the following years can only be analyzed in terms of their interconnection and continuity with the previous European political, military, and diplomatic events. Therefore, the period from the conclusion of the Berlin Congress to the mid-1880s is considered an integral part of the Great Eastern Crisis, i.e., the stage of the resistance of the Balkan nations against the decisions of the Berlin Congress. These patchy decisions again incited waves of discontent, and the people

<sup>12</sup> Ayten Kiliç, “A Russian Machiavelli in the Ottoman Empire. Count Ignatiev Conquers Istanbul,” in *The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–78*, ed. Ömer Turan, Ankara: METU, 2007, 1–24.

<sup>13</sup> Koz'menko, *Sbornik*, 144–55.

<sup>14</sup> As for the Balkans, the independence of Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania was proclaimed at the Congress, while Greece gained territory (although it did not participate in the wars against the Ottomans, it was an important location for British maritime traffic across the Mediterranean). Furthermore, the Treaty not only contributed to the sufferings of the population in Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina (both the Muslim and Christian) but also envisaged that this territory would be occupied by Austria-Hungary. Ottoman Bulgaria was artificially divided into two parts – the northern one, which became the tributary Principality of Bulgaria, and the southern one, called Eastern Rumelia, which was to return under Ottoman suzerainty. Although Ottoman Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo were not mentioned by name, it was clear that Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty referred to them. Ernest L. Woodward, *The Congress of Berlin 1878*, London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1920.

in the Balkans continued to resist: in Bulgaria, in the Rhodope Mountains, there were two simultaneous but opposing armed uprisings (of the local Christian and Muslim populations); the Albanian and Bosniak followers of the League of Prizren were active in the Ottoman regions of Western Albania, Western Macedonia, and Kosovo; the Christian inhabitants of the parts that had remained within the Ottoman Empire after the Serbo-Ottoman war rioted and organized rebel groups that filled the forests; the Kresna (Macedonian) Uprising broke out in Ottoman Macedonia,<sup>15</sup> and rebels were also active in the western part of Ottoman Macedonia and the Provisional Government of Macedonia;<sup>16</sup> during the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Austro-Hungarian troops only succeeded in breaking the resistance of the Muslim population and gaining a foothold in both regions by military force.<sup>17</sup> The reasons for this were not only the inadequate decisions and provisions agreed upon in Berlin but also the obstruction of their implementation by the signatories, which created long-term problems in the Balkans. For example, on the one hand, the Powers ignored the fact that the Ottoman Empire did not actually implement Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty, which applied to the rest of the so-called European Turkey. On the other hand, the same was done in 1885 when the Principality of Bulgaria was united with the so-called Eastern Rumelia. The dissatisfaction of the Balkan peoples with the “Solomonic” decisions in Berlin was, among other things, reflected by the explosion of migration in the Balkan lands.<sup>18</sup> The literature reveals that during this period, about two million refugees from various ethnic groups and religions moved across the Balkans.<sup>19</sup> The new political map of this part of Europe, sanctioned by the treaties following the Berlin Congress, was the main reason for this huge demographic movement of the population in the Balkans, which in some regions caused new ethnic regroupings and long-term refugee frustrations. And – yes! Perhaps the Balkans *produce more history than they can consume*, but the question that is not being addressed is: “Who has been causing, directly and continuously, this historical reality?” As Nobel Prize laureate Milton Friedman wrote: “It’s always so attractive to be able to do good at somebody else’s expense.”

### Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty: Intentions vs. Implementation

The diplomatic language is specific in that it is concise, with words that are wisely chosen and applied to describe deeper states, correlations, and influences, as opposed

<sup>15</sup> *Makedonija vo istočnata kriza 1875–1881*, ed. Mihajlo Apostolski, Skopje: MANU, 1978; *Kresnenskoto vostanie vo Makedonija 1878–1879*, ed. Mihajlo Apostolski, Skopje: MANU, 1982.

<sup>16</sup> Vančo Gorgiev, *Sloboda ili Smrt. Makedonskoto nacionalnoosloboditelno delo vo Solunskiot vilayet 1893–1903 godina*, Skopje: Tabernakul, 2003, 10–5.

<sup>17</sup> *War and Diplomacy*, 125–253.

<sup>18</sup> Maria Pandevska, *Prisilni migracii vo Makedonija vo godinite na Golemata istočna kriza (1875–1881)*, Skopje: Misla, 1993.

<sup>19</sup> *Istorija srpskog naroda*, Vol. V.1, Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1981, 525–6.

to what one might read at first glance. That is why the short Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty should be analyzed here briefly:

The Sublime Porte undertakes scrupulously to apply in the Island of Crete the Organic Law of 1868, with such modifications as may be considered equitable.

Similar laws adapted to local requirements, excepting as regards the exemption from taxation granted to Crete, shall also be introduced into the other parts of Turkey in Europe for which no special organization has been provided by the present Treaty.

The Sublime Porte shall depute special commissions, in which the native element shall be largely represented, to settle the details of the new laws in each province.

The schemes of organization resulting from this labors shall be submitted for examination to the Sublime Porte, which before promulgating the Acts for them into force, shall consult the European Commission instituted for Eastern Roumelia.<sup>20</sup>

A careful analysis of this Article may lead to the following conclusions:

- 1) The use of the term “scrupulously,” which means “in a very careful and thorough way,” contains the essence of the real situation on the battlefield after the wars. The truce signed in Edirne stopped the Slavic armies in certain positions, thus the Ottoman domination in the areas of Ottoman Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo was not in question. The Ottoman army was not defeated here, nor did these Balkan regions directly enter into some previous agreements and settlements, unlike Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, all these regions did not have the geopolitical significance of the Greek state, protected by the interests of its patron – the powerful British Empire. For these reasons, at the Congress, the Great Powers could have only “asked” (but not forced) the Ottoman Empire to carry out reforms in these regions. The great military defeat of the Ottoman army in the context of the loss of both Bosnia and Herzegovina and parts of Greece – without war – was sufficient for the interested parties. In this case, it was important to prevent further major destabilization of the territorial balance of the states that were to rule sections of the Morava-Vardar Valley leading to the important port of Thessaloniki. The Serbian penetration in this direction was considerably worrying for Austria-Hungary, which had financed the building of this part of the railway. It was preferable that the southern section remained under Ottoman rule rather than that of another Slavic state.
- 2) The reforms proposed in the text regarding “the other parts of Turkey in Europe” contain restrictions such as “with such modifications as may be considered equitable,” thus distinguishing between the position of Crete and the Ottoman provinces in these regions. This is logical since Crete indeed differed greatly from Ottoman Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo. One very important distinc-

---

<sup>20</sup> “Treaty between Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey for the Settlement of Affairs in the East: Signed at Berlin, July 13, 1878,” *American Journal of International Law* 2 (1908), 412.

tion was the fact that a number of millets had already been functioning in these regions, not only among the Macedonian but also among the Albanian population. Of course, one must not forget about the schism between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Bulgarian Exarchate.

- 3) In its essence, Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin was mainly based on a more comprehensive document, i.e., the Sultan's Decree of August 23, 1868, called *Firman. Organic Regulations for Crete*. In trying to understand the essence of the reforms envisaged at the Congress of Berlin, it is in fact necessary to briefly analyze this decree. Its Article 4 stated:

The island shall be divided into as many Sandjaks or districts as may be found necessary. These districts shall be administrated by Mutessarifs (Governors) chosen from among the functionaries of the Imperial Government; the Governors shall be half Mussulman and half Christian. The Mussulman Governors shall be assisted by Christian Mouavins (Deputies), and the Christian Governors by Mussulman Mouavins, both appointed by the Imperial Government.<sup>21</sup>

Article 5 also provided for broad Christian participation in the governing process in smaller administrative units – the Kazas.<sup>22</sup> These amendments, unlike the existing Vilayet Law (1867), allowed almost twice as much participation of non-Muslims in administrative power. A similar trend was observed in the case of the General Council (Article 12):

A Council-General shall be established at the seat of the Government, elected by the population, in which each Kaza shall be represented by two Delegates; every exclusively Mussulman Kaza will send Mussulman Delegates to the Council-General; the same shall be observed towards the exclusively Christian Kazas; and every Mixed Kaza shall be represented by a Mussulman Delegate.<sup>23</sup>

This initial inclusion of Muslims and Christians in governing bodies was particularly emphasized in Article 9:

Civil and military tribunals shall be appointed at the seat of the Government and in the Sandjaks and Kazas. The tribunals at the seat of the Government and in the Mixed Sandjaks and Kazas shall be composed of Mussulman and Christian members chosen by the people. In Sandjaks and Kazas exclusively Christian, those tribunals shall be composed of Christians only.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> *Greece with the Cyclades & Northern Sporades. Appendix*, London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1920, 160.

<sup>22</sup> “The Sandjaks shall be divided into Kazas (Cantons), and the Kazas shall be governed by Caimacams (Sub-Governors) chosen and appointed by the Sublime Porte, and taken as occasion requires from among the Mussulman or Christian functionaries of the Imperial Government. These Caimacams shall be assisted by Mouavins in accordance with the abovementioned rules.” Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 161.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

The establishment of a governing body called the Council of Elders for each Kaza and D  mog  rontie for each Sandjak was introduced in Article 10: “[...] Each commune shall have a Council of Elders and each Sandjak a D  mog  rontie or Council of Elders for each of the Mussulman and Christian Communities,” with emphasis on the method of their election: “The members of those Councils will be elected by their constituents.” As was pointed out in Article 12, the duties of these administrative bodies were essential for ensuring the stable everyday life and prosperity of the population and consisted of:

[...] works of public utility, such as the development of the means of communication, the formation of banks, and everything tending to improve agriculture, commerce, and industry, and measures for spreading public instruction in all matters of general usefulness.<sup>25</sup>

This brief presentation of the main points of the document shows clearly the principal idea of the reforms. The establishment of some kind of semi-autonomy was meant primarily to address the most pressing problem the central Ottoman government was facing with regard to the large multi-cultural provinces under its rule. This meant a lack of full control over the corrupt, often criminalized, inefficient, lazy, and at times fanatical local administration. The farther the provinces were from the center, the greater the incrimination of the independent administrative bodies. This situation was the most frequent cause of dissatisfaction (rebellions, uprisings, and insurrections) on the part of the members of the non-Muslim millets. All of this had a direct impact on the economic development of the Empire, which was already clearly falling behind the western part of Europe.

4) The question of exactly which territories were covered by the generalized term “the other parts of Turkey in Europe” in Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty should also be “decoded.” The understanding and interpretation of this very general geographic term varied depending on which of the opposing sides dominated at the diplomatic meetings and gatherings of the Great European Powers. What must also be emphasized is the fact that these terms, imposed by those in power, were neither na  ve nor accidental. They depicted the concrete power balance on the battlefield as well as on the diplomatic front during the crisis, and as it was becoming unpredictable, the meaning of these terms changed considerably. When researching how peoples and regions have been labeled within the diplomatic correspondence, it is important to consider who had the power to give those names. For example, in the case of Ottoman Macedonia, the power of giving names rested with the established state institutions of the Ottoman Empire, the European powers and their representatives, and the institutions and intellectual elites of the neighboring Balkan states.<sup>26</sup> This *labeling* depended in many ways on the knowledge of nation-building processes, which at that time was general and rather limited (as can

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> Filip Putinja,   oslin Stref-Fener, *Teorije o etnicitetu*, Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 1997 (original title: *Th  ories de l’  thnicit  *), 160–70.

be seen on the example of the interpretation of the term “millet”),<sup>27</sup> but even more on the day-to-day political interests of the involved parties. Therefore, in the diplomatic conversation, and especially in the international agreements and settlements, the general terms “European Turkey,” “Rumelia,” and “Bulgaria” were used to describe Ottoman Macedonia. Very rarely in diplomatic correspondence it was referred to as “Western Rumelia” or “Macedonia.”<sup>28</sup> In many cases, its territory – partly or entirely – was designated with such Ottoman administrative terms as Bitola Vilayet, Thessaloniki Vilayet, Kosovo/Skopje Vilayet, etc. In some very specific situations, a part of Macedonia was called the Vardar Valley.<sup>29</sup> The reasons for this mélange of words were primarily the deeper and far-reaching political goals pursued by the actors in the crisis.

Given all this, just two years after the signing of the Berlin Treaty, the merging of the term “scrupulously” with the need to implement the proposed reforms “overseen” by the European Commission of Eastern Rumelia proved to be a very crucial designation. The Sublime Porte gave serious thought to this term and hastened to take the “reforming” into its own hands and decide on it by itself.<sup>30</sup> It simply appointed its own Commission, one without European representatives. Nor was the local Christian population included in it. In April 1880, the Porte informed the European Commission of Eastern Rumelia (which had finished *The Organic Regulation for Eastern Rumelia*) that all the formalities stipulated in Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty had been fulfilled on their part and the only thing that remained was to consult the European Commission before enforcing the “new” vilayet statutes. However, the latter were merely a copy of the 1867 Vilayet Law. The European Commission found that the Ottoman side had violated two crucial points of the Berlin agreement: the project of the “reforms” had been drafted by Ottoman officials alone, without the participation of European representatives and the local population, and it did not have any common ground with the statute of administrative autonomy of Crete or Eastern Rumelia. The European Commission thus rejected this Ottoman proposal. Afterward, the Commission prepared its own draft of “The Law on Vilayets in European Turkey” with amendments that were closer to the principles of the *Organic Regulations for Crete*. Also, this European project envisaged reforming the police in terms of the participation of the local population. The long discussions during which the European project was thoroughly reviewed and analyzed did not produce any results. After a long diplomatic correspondence, the Porte succeeded in quietly putting this project to death. However, soon after 1878, it introduced the

<sup>27</sup> Maria Pandevska, Makedonka Mitrova, “The Concept of the Millet in Turkish Dictionaries. Its Alteration and the Impact on Ottoman Macedonia,” *Balkanica Posnaniensia* 26 (2019), 171–92.

<sup>28</sup> *Report Presented to the International Commission at Constantinople as to State of Macedonia since the Treaty of Berlin*, London: Gilbert and Rivingston, 1880.

<sup>29</sup> Pandevski, *Macedonia*, 139–44.

<sup>30</sup> The Sublime Porte already had the necessary experience (not only with Crete) on how to obstruct this kind of reforms since the Lebanese Crisis in 1860. Dragi Gorgiev, “Administrativnata struktura na Solunskiot, Bitolskiot i Kosovskiot vilayet vo vtorata polovina na XIX vek,” *Prilozi. Oddelenie za opštestveni nauki* 40 (1–2) (2010), 163–84.



administrative reorganization of its Vilayets and Sandjaks, which eventually led to the ethnic-territorial fragmentation of the Slavic part of the Christian population.<sup>31</sup> It cannot be ignored that having in mind the *Organic Regulations for Crete*, the Sublime Porte tried to restructure its administrative units from Vilayets and Sandjaks down to Kazas (where necessary and possible) so that they would become mixed rather than entirely Christian. The Berlin duties of the Porte were also suddenly “forgotten” by the major European Powers. And in 1885 came the unification of the Principality of Bulgaria with the so-called Eastern Rumelia as the end of all these diplomatic games and outsmarting. This crisis was terminated, but bitter frozen conflicts remained well into the 19th and 20th centuries (unfortunately even into the 21st century), such as the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina or the so-called “Macedonian Question.” The Great Eastern Crisis and its outcomes were the basis of all future Balkan wars, including the Great War that started with the first bullet fired in Sarajevo.

### **Instead of Conclusion: Ottoman Macedonia on the European Seesaw**

The Berlin Treaty, unlike the previous five agreements reached during the crisis, established for a very long time the *de jure* and *de facto* permanently unchanged status of Ottoman Macedonia. Nevertheless, the clauses of that Treaty, if implemented, would have eased the difficult socio-economic situation of the Macedonian people.<sup>32</sup> This agreement also had extremely negative consequences for the internal development of Ottoman Macedonia since, in a legal sense, only the 1880 Vilayet Law remained. Two points of this law are especially interesting in terms of the participation of non-Muslims in the local administration. Firstly, none of the non-Muslims who were part of the administration held any position of executive authority in the bodies in which they were included. They were just ordinary members of councils or municipal commissions. All the presidents, officeholders, secretaries, commissioners, and inspectors in the local administration were Muslims. And secondly, very often one or two Christians, being

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, 169.

<sup>32</sup> Historical sources provide evidence of Macedonian involvement in all phases of the crisis – except, of course, the diplomatic one. For example, due to organizing the Razlovtsi insurrection (in May 1876 in the regions of Piyanets and Malesh), Ottoman Macedonia was included in the map of uprisings and rebellions of the Christian people in the first stage of the crisis. We also come across Macedonians fighting in the Slavic armies in the third (the military) stage. The Kumanovo-Kriva Palanka Uprising was also indirectly linked to the approach of Serbian troops toward the borders of Ottoman Macedonia in the same stage. During the fourth stage of the crisis, the Macedonians organized the Kresna (Macedonian) Uprising (1878). As a result of the usurpation of the rebellion’s leadership by the Sofia Committee “Unity,” the fighting soon moved to the Razlog region. This stage also included the events related to the Conspiracy in Western Macedonia and the formation of the Provisional Government of Macedonia. Pandevski, *Macedonia*, 37–83; N. Levintov, “Kresnenskoe vostanie,” *Vopros istorii* 4 (1951), 76.

wealthy and influential persons, were members of more than one municipal commission and almost the only representatives of their community.

Local corruption continued to flourish. In addition, there emerged among the Muslim part of the population the inevitable feeling that the situation was changing and that the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from these territories in the near future was possible. The influx of Muhajir refugees and their dismal fates were visible proof of the likelihood of this scenario.

Due to its geopolitical position, Ottoman Macedonia could have remained neither on the margins nor completely on the outside of the migratory movements in the Balkans that had been prompted by all four stages of the crisis. Indeed, waves of Muslims (from the lost Ottoman territories) were heading toward it. Although a common term is used in historical literature and other sources for all these refugees, they did not constitute a homogenous group. The term “Muhajir” encompasses all peoples of the Muslim faith – Turks, Albanians, Pomaks, Bosniaks, the Cherkess, Tatars, etc. – whose traditions, ethnicity, and language were, however, distinct from each other. They lived in these regions, and their faith took on a political character during the Ottoman territorial retreat from Europe. On the other hand, parts of the Macedonian population that participated in the anti-Ottoman insurrections and uprisings during the crisis left Ottoman Macedonia (moving from the border regions to Serbia and Bulgaria). These two-way migratory movements led to a greater *mélange* of ethnic groups in the Macedonian territories. It is necessary to point out here that the pejorative term “Macedonian salad” does not only refer to the division of Macedonians within the affiliation to different Christian millets (those under the jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and its Serbian branch, the Bulgarian Exarchate, the Protestant Church, or the Uniate Church). This pejorative term also refers to all the Jews and Vlachs (who lived in enclaves throughout the Ottoman Balkans) and to all the diverse Muslim ethnic groups.<sup>33</sup> The newly created or expanded Balkan Christian states succeeded in ethnically cleansing parts of their newly acquired territories, in addition to diplomatic attempts to repatriate the Muslim population. In contrast, no ethnic cleansing was carried out in Ottoman Macedonia until the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) when both the Christian and Muslim Macedonian populations came under attack of the armies.

The essential geopolitical features of Ottoman Macedonia were related to the fact that, unlike the surrounding Ottoman Balkan provinces (Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece), it went from being a central Ottoman province to a peripheral one only after the events of the Great Eastern Crisis, i.e., in the last decades of the 19th century. This change had a significant impact and importance on its future historical development. It was the beginning of its strategic significance in a broader sense, expressed clearly in the statement, “Whoever rules Macedonia rules the Balkans!”. Along the Balkan borders of the Empire (and consequently around Macedonia), new Christian states

---

<sup>33</sup> Maria Pandevska, “The Term ‘Macedonian(s)’ in Ottoman Macedonia. On the Map and in the Mind,” *Nationalities Papers. The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 40 (5) (2012), 747–66.

were created. Subsequently, these states continued the process of nation-building by fostering a common national identity through all available means – state money, civil and military services, development of culture, press and education system, etc.<sup>34</sup> These objective geopolitical factors induced the new states, aware that the Empire would sooner or later withdraw from the Balkans, to start, using all available means, creating the preconditions for the division of the remaining Ottoman heritage. Ottoman Macedonia played a central role in their relations. By opening churches and schools, sending their priests, teachers, and paramilitaries, these states launched a fierce propaganda war in and for Macedonia. The well-known military tactic, found in the old Roman proverb, “Divide et impera!”, was fully put into practice. This very systematic policy, practiced for decades within the Macedonian ethnicity, managed to penetrate parts of its substance, slowing down its constitutional processes. It is an indisputable historical fact that no other anti-Ottoman Balkan liberation movement had faced such limiting conditions.

As for the unfulfilled Article XXIII of the Berlin Treaty, its “resurrection” occurred in the 1890s when it became one of the pillars for the formation and functioning of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO) founded in 1893 (from 1896 SMARO, from 1905 IMARO).<sup>35</sup> The aspirations for autonomy were partly founded on international legal grounds, i.e., the provisions of the 1878 Berlin Treaty.<sup>36</sup> The

<sup>34</sup> Katrin Bozeva Abazi, *The Shaping of Bulgarian and Serbian National Identities 1800–1900*, Skopje: INI, 2007; Holm Zundhausen, *Istorija Srbije od 19. do 20. veka*, Beograd: Clio, 2009 (original title: *Geschichte Serbiens. 19.–21. Jahrhundert*).

<sup>35</sup> In the Balkan historiography, the question about the first name and the first constitution of this Macedonian underground organization has not yet been settled. The proposed versions are in fact only hypotheses based on confusing and contradictory historical data. Resolving this matter requires further research and new genuine original sources. Some new documents indicate that it was initially called the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO). See Mihajlo Minoski, “Prilog kon prašaneto na imeto na Makedonskata revolucionerna organizacija vo početniot period na nejzinoto (1893–1896),” *Prilozi* 26 (2) (1995), 62–71. Its official name SMARO (Secret Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization) dates back to the Thessaloniki Congress in 1896 (this issue is still debated in historiography due to the fact that the document “The Constitution of SMARO” itself bears no date). See Maria Pandevska, “Na patot kon Ilinden. Ustavot na TMORO i negovoto datirañe,” in *100 godini Ilinden 1903–2003*, Vol. 2, Skopje: MANU, 2005, 141–54. It is, however, not disputed that the organization was renamed at the Rila Congress in 1905 to IMARO (Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization). Throughout its existence, it was unofficially referred to by the abbreviated name “Internal Organization,” as opposed to “the Other,” external one – the Vrhovist (Supreme) Committee with headquarters in Sofia. The term MRO can be used generally to refer to the Organization during its entire functioning (1893–1908). It self-dissolved after 1908 and, therefore, all the future organizations that emerged from its various factions were in fact other types of organizations with different activities and goals.

<sup>36</sup> Contrary to the Macedonian historiography (Bitovski, *Makedonija*), there is a tendency in some publications to minimize the significance and importance of the opportunities for Ottoman Macedonia’s development that were envisaged in Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin, had it not become a dead letter (Duncan M. Perry, *The Politics of Terror. The Macedonian Liberation Movements 1893–1903*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988). More on the meaning of Article XXIII can be found in the sources, i.e., in the published positions of Western democratic public figures of the time: *Pour l’Arménie et Macé-*

historical sources credited to this Macedonian underground organization attest to this because its initiators believed that it was an unfulfilled duty of Europe.<sup>37</sup> The Macedonian revolutionaries were in a visionary way aware that the fate of their homeland Macedonia was in the hands of the Great European Powers and dependent on their opposing interests. The liberation axiom proclaimed by William Gladstone, “Macedonia for Macedonians,” was added to this call to international standards:

The hopelessness of the Turkish government would make me witness with delight its being swept out the countries which it tortures [...] Next to the Ottoman Government nothing can be more deplorable and blameworthy than jealousies between Greek and Slav, and plans by the States already existing for appropriating other territory. Why not Macedonia for Macedonians, as well as Bulgaria for Bulgarians and Servia for Servians?<sup>38</sup>

The axiom “Macedonia for Macedonians” was a direct negation of the efforts of the neighboring Balkan countries which strove to divide it. However, the European Powers, committed only to their own interests, did not intend to abide by their undertaken (but unfulfilled) obligations, while the frozen conflicts remained neuralgic for the Balkan region. Historical scholarship analyzes and interprets all these situations as long-lasting historical processes, which (unfortunately) continue to this day.

## References

- Bitovski Krste, *Makedonija vo vremeto na Golemata istočna kriza (1875–1881)*, Skopje: INI, 1982.
- Bozeva Abazi Katrin, *The Shaping of Bulgarian and Serbian National Identities 1800–1900*, Skopje: INI, 2007.
- Čalić Mari-Žanin, *Jugoistočna Evropa. Globalna istorija*, trans. Ranka Gašić, Sarajevo: UMHS, 2020.
- Gorgiev Dragi, “Administrativnata struktura na Solunskiot, Bitolskiot i Kosovskiot vilaet vo vtorata polovina na XIX vek,” *Prilozi. Oddelenie za opštestveni nauki* 40 (1–2) (2010), 163–84.
- Gorgiev Vančo, *Sloboda ili Smrt. Makedonskoto nacionalnoosloboditelno delo vo Solunskiot vilaet 1893–1903 godina*, Skopje: Tabernakul, 2003.
- Greece with the Cyclades & Northern Sporades. Appendix*, London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1920.
- Istorija srpskog naroda*, Vol. V.1, Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1981.
- Karpat Kemal H., “*Millets* and Nationality. The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, Vol. 1, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982, 141–70.

---

doine. *Manifestations Franco-Anglo-Italiennes*, pref. Victor Bérard, introd. Pierre Quillard, report Francis de Pressense, Paris: Société nouvelle de librairie & d’édition, 1904.

<sup>37</sup> *VMRO prez pogleda na nejnite osnovateli*, Sofiâ: Voenno Izdatelstvo, 2002, 18–9.

<sup>38</sup> Gladstone’s letter was addressed to the President of the Byron Society and bears the date of January 19, 1897. Quoted after: “Times,” February 6, 1897, 12.

- Kiliç Ayten, "A Russian Machiavelli in the Ottoman Empire. Count Ignatiev Conquers Istanbul," in *The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–78*, ed. Ömer Turan, Ankara: METU, 2007, 1–24.
- Koz'menko I. V., *Sbornik dogovorov Rossii s drugimi gosudarstvami 1856–1817*, Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo političeskoj literatury, 1952.
- Kresnenskoto vostanie vo Makedonija 1878–1879*, ed. Mihajlo Apostolski, Skopje: MANU, 1982.
- Levintov N., "Kresnenskoe vostanie," *Vopros istorii* 4 (1951), 56–78.
- Makedonija vo istočnata kriza 1875–1881*, ed. Mihajlo Apostolski, Skopje: MANU, 1978.
- Minoski Mihajlo, "Prilog kon prašaneto na imeto na Makedonskata revolucionerna organizacija vo početniot period na nejzinoto (1893–1896)," *Prilozi* 26 (2) (1995), 62–71.
- Ortajli Ilber, *Najdolgiot vek na Imperijata*, Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija, Sojuz na turskite nevladini organizacii vo Republika Makedonija, 2009.
- Osvoboždenie Bolgarii ot tureckogo iga*, Vol. 3, Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1967.
- Pandevska Maria, "Na patot kon Ilinden. Ustavot na TMORO i negovoto datirañe," in *100 godini Ilinden 1903–2003*, Vol. 2, Skopje: MANU, 2005, 141–54.
- Pandevska Maria, *Prisilni migracii vo Makedonija vo godinite na Golemata istočna kriza (1875–1881)*, Skopje: Misl, 1993.
- Pandevska Maria, "The Term 'Macedonian(s)' in Ottoman Macedonia. On the Map and in the Mind," *Nationalities Papers. The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 40 (5) (2012), 747–66.
- Pandevska Maria, Mitrova Makedonka, "The Concept of the Millet in Turkish Dictionaries. Its Alteration and the Impact on Ottoman Macedonia," *Balkanica Posnaniensia* 26 (2019), 171–92.
- Pandevski Manol, *Macedonia and Macedonians in the Eastern Crisis*, Skopje: Macedonian Review Edition, 1978.
- Pandevski Manol, "Makedonija vo megunarodnite spogodbi i dogovori od vremeto na istočnata kriza," in *Makedonskoto osloboditelno delo vo XIX i XX vek*, Vol. 5: *Projavi, relacii, likovi*, Skopje: Misl, 1986, 155–85.
- Pandevski Manol, "Položbata na Makedonija vo osmanskata imperija kon krajot na XIX i početokot na XX vek," in *Makedonskoto osloboditelno delo vo XIX i XX vek*, Vol. 5: *Projavi, relacii, likovi*, Skopje: Misl, 1986, 7–29.
- Perry Duncan M., *The Politics of Terror. The Macedonian Liberation Movements 1893–1903*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988.
- Pour l'Arménie et Macédoine. Manifestations Franco-Anglo-Italiennes*, pref. Victor Bérard, introd. Pierre Quillard, report Francis de Pressense, Paris: Société nouvelle de librairie & d'édition, 1904.
- Putinja Filip, Stref-Fener Žoslin, *Teorije o etnicitetu*, Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 1997 (original title: *Théories de l'ethnicité*).
- Report Presented to the International Commission at Constantinople as to State of Macedonia since the Treaty of Berlin*, London: Gilbert and Rivingston, 1880.
- "Treaty between Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey for the Settlement of Affairs in the East: Signed at Berlin, July 13, 1878," *American Journal of International Law* 2 (1908), 401–24.
- VMRO prez pogleda na nejnite osnovateli*, Sofiâ: Voenno Izdatelstvo, 2002.
- War and Diplomacy. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz, Peter Sluglett, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011.
- Woodward Ernest L., *The Congress of Berlin 1878*, London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1920.
- Zundhaussen Holm, *Istorija Srbije od 19. do 20. veka*, Beograd: Clio, 2009 (original title: *Geschichte Serbiens. 19.–21. Jahrhundert*).

## **Turkish Borrowings in Bulgarian Lexis Related to Cuisine and Cooking**

*Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa*

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

e-mail: [mawal@amu.edu.pl](mailto:mawal@amu.edu.pl)

ORCID: 0000-0001-8871-973

### **Abstract**

Lexical borrowings from Turkish occupy an important place in the lexis of modern Bulgarian. Attempts to eradicate Turcisms, which had been underway for several decades, have been unsuccessful. Even systemic measures have failed. It has not been possible to replace with native lexis or lexis borrowed from other languages in particular that vocabulary which has penetrated most deeply into the consciousness of Bulgarians, that is, words used for centuries in everyday life. This compact group, saturated to the brim with Turcisms, is formed by the vocabulary related to the kitchen and its equipment as well as cooking. The author discusses lexemes from this very thematic group. They were extracted from cookbooks and monographs devoted to Bulgarian culinary traditions.

### **Keywords**

modern Bulgarian language, lexis, colloquial language, Turcisms, cuisine, cooking

During the more than 500 years of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, Turcisms had managed to settle and spread in the everyday speech of Bulgarians to such an extent that when attempts were made in the early 19th century to create a New Bulgarian literary language, one of the most important tasks facing the writers and activists of the National Revival was to purge the language of Orientalisms. The puristic measures were long-lasting and quite extensive, but they could not be carried out with equal consistency in all spheres of language use – some areas of life proved resistant to such efforts. Therefore, it is not surprising that Turcisms in Bulgarian have become an object of inquiry for many

linguists and that a rich literature on the subject (both monographs and articles) now exists, focusing on, among other things, their history and use in modern Bulgarian,<sup>1</sup> their influence on Bulgarian vocabulary, and their presence in dialects.<sup>2</sup>

One area of life where the vocabulary of Turkish origin has become firmly established is cuisine.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this article is to show the persistence of lexis from this sphere in modern Bulgarian. To that end, examples taken from popular culinary books will be discussed – from the culinary guide published in 1870 by Petko Slaveykov,<sup>4</sup> considered to be the oldest Bulgarian culinary book, to contemporary books containing recipes for particular dishes and concerning cuisine described as “national,”<sup>5</sup> on the one hand, and “related to tradition and rituals,”<sup>6</sup> on the other. The lexis extracted from them and discussed here demonstrates that Bulgarian culinary vocabulary has remained largely unchanged since it was first recorded, that is, since the second half of the 19th century.

Before discussing culinary lexis, however, it is necessary to make a few remarks related to the process of the formation of the New Bulgarian literary language, for when the Bulgarian intellectual elite of the 19th century began to discuss language, one of the most important goals of their efforts turned out to be the replacement of numerous borrowings with native words. The conditions were not very favorable to such puristic actions, given the fairly widespread bilingualism (or even trilingualism since a large part of the population spoke not only their native language but also Turkish and Greek, which was necessary in urban settings),<sup>7</sup> however, writers who declared war on Greek and Turkish included whole lists of words translated into Bulgarian in their books. This was done, among others, by Neophyte of Rila, author of the first grammar rules published in print (1835),<sup>8</sup> who included a glossary at the end of the book entitled *Речи турски и неколко гречески, които са в употребување на сегашно време в сичката Болгария, истолкувани по возможности с равнозначители славенски*

<sup>1</sup> Максим Стаменов, *Съдбата на турцизмите в българския език и в българската култура*, София: Изток-Запад, 2001; Alf Grannes, *Turco-Bulgarica. Articles in English and French Concerning Turkish Influence on Bulgarian*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Jordanka Georgiewa-Okon, *Turczyzmy w bułgarskich dialektach południowo-wschodnich. Dialekty rodopskie i wschodnie dialekty rupskie*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Bulgarian cuisine under Ottoman rule and its links to rituals and rites are discussed in a monograph on cultural anthropology: Иван Павлов, *Присъствия на храненето по българските земи през XV–XIX век*, София: Академично издателство «Проф. Марин Дринов», 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Петко Славейков, *Готварска книга или наставления за всякакви гостбѣ според както ги правят в Цариград и разны домашны справы събрани от разны книги*, Цариград: Печатница на Македония, 1870 (reprint 2018, Ямбол: ИПК Светлина АД).

<sup>5</sup> Любомир Петров, Евгений Йорданов, Снежана Узунова, Николай Джелепов, *Българска национална кухня*, София: Земиздат, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Елица Минева, Татяна Карданова, *Старинни рецепти за празници и обреди. Над 200 питки и ястия от българската кухня*, София: СББ Медиа АД, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Надка Николова, *Билингвизмът в българските земи през XV–XIX век*, Шумен: Университетско издателство «Епископ Константин Преславски», 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Неофит Рилски, *Болгарска граматика*, фототипно издание, София: Наука и изкуство, 1984.

или русийски (Turkish words and a few Greek words that are now used throughout Bulgaria, translated as far as possible into Slavic and Russian equivalents). As the title suggests, native lexis proved insufficient, so Neophyte had to use words borrowed from Russian. The same was done decades later by Nayden Gerov, author of the first multi-volume dictionary of the Bulgarian language (the first volume was published in 1895, the fifth in 1905).<sup>9</sup> The most famous of those who strove to purge the Bulgarian language of Turcisms was Ivan Bogorov, a zealous wordsmith, whose name later became (not quite rightly) synonymous with purism taken to the verge of absurdity under Ottoman rule.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the authors of books addressed to a wide range of readers, in order to make sure that they would be understood correctly, provided some of the words they used with their Turkish equivalents. This was done, for example, by Sophronius of Vratsa, the first translator of Aesop's fables,<sup>11</sup> and also Petar Beron, author of the so-called *Рибен буквар* (Primer with a fish), the first textbook for secular schools (published in 1824).<sup>12</sup> This proves the deep rootedness in the lexicon of Bulgarians of a large number of words that, although foreign, could not be easily replaced by new equivalents.<sup>13</sup>

The most resistant to the process of Bulgarianization was the colloquial vocabulary related to building, furnishing, and equipping a house (craft terminology) and the lexis related to cooking. Five hundred years of subordination to the Ottoman Empire resulted in the adoption of many behaviors and customs. The culinary tradition is a good example of this, as even today, reading cookbooks, and often also restaurant menus, requires knowledge of many Turkish terms. The same applies to the books on folk rituals, the calendar of religious and agrarian holidays, and cultural anthropology in the broadest sense, which have become very popular in recent years. Since most kitchen utensils and dishes considered traditional (and even national) bear Turkish names, there is no indication that anything is about to change in this regard. An example of this can be found in the titles of the chapters of the book *Българска национална кухня* (Bulgarian national cuisine)<sup>14</sup> and the names of some of the dishes described there:

<sup>9</sup> Найден Геров, *Речникъ на българскый языкъ*, т. 1–5, Пловдив: Дружествена печатница «Съгласие», 1895–1905.

<sup>10</sup> Mariola Walczak, *Język piśmiennictwa bułgarskiego. Zarys dziejów*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1998, 68–71.

<sup>11</sup> Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa, *Bułgarski Ezop*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2009, 15–45.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 46–55.

<sup>13</sup> We gained proof of this anew in the late 20th century. When the press was freed from censorship after the political changes of the 1990s, Turkish borrowings immediately appeared in it. As a loaded vocabulary, they facilitated the creation of emotionally charged and evaluative texts. On this topic in more detail: Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa, Diana Ivanova, “O języku współczesnej prasy bułgarskiej i polskiej,” in *Słowiańszczyzna w kontekście przemian Europy końca XX wiek. Język – tradycja – kultura*, ed. Emil Tokarz, Katowice: Śląsk, 2001, 306–12.

<sup>14</sup> Петров, Йорданов, Узунова, Джелепов, *Българска национална кухня*, 276–95.



- *Салати и туршии* (*туршия* – Tur. *turşu* ‘vegetables preserved in brine or vinegar – peppers, tomatoes, carrots, cabbage, celery, and others’<sup>15</sup>);
- *Супи и чорби* (*чорба* – Tur. *çorba* ‘a dish of cooked vegetables and/or meat that contains a lot of water and should be eaten with a spoon, a thick soup’);
- *Ястия от ориз и булгур* (*булгур* – Tur. *bulgur* ‘cooking wheat, mashed or coarsely ground’);
- *Гювечи* (*гювеч* – Tur. *güveç* ‘1. a clay vessel for baking food in an oven, 2. a dish, usually of meat and vegetables, prepared in such a vessel’);
- *Кюфтета от зеленчуци и гъби* (*кюфте* – Tur. *köfte* ‘minced meat cutlet’);
- *Сарми* (*сарми* – Tur. *sarma*, literally, “wrapped,” ‘a dish of minced meat and rice wrapped in cabbage or grape leaves’);
- *Ястия от карантия* (*карантия/карънтия* – Tur. *kırıntı* ‘offal, head and feet of the animal intended for cooking’);
- *Качамаци* (*качамак* – Tur. *kaçamak* ‘boiled corn flour cake, mamalaya’).

Most of the names cited here come originally from Persian, and Turkish was just an intermediate language in the chain of borrowings during Ottoman rule. Words that originated in Persian or Arabic and penetrated other languages through Turkish are called Ottomanisms. Turkish was also an intermediate language in the borrowing of other popular modern culinary terms, such as *мезе* (Tur. *meze* ‘an appetizer or salad to accompany alcoholic beverages’). It was also an independent source of some borrowings, cf. *кайма* (Tur. *kıyma* ‘chopped meat’); *катък* (Tur. *katık* ‘1. addition to bread, a snack, such as white cheese, olives, pieces of sausage, etc., 2. sour condensed milk, 3. a type of white cheese, 4. sour cream’).

The names of many desserts popular to this day leave no doubt as to their Oriental origin: *баклава* (Tur. *baklava* ‘a syrup-soaked dessert made of thin slices of dough interleaved with nuts’), *халва* (Tur. *helva* ‘a confectionery product consisting of sugar, sesame flour, sesame oil, nuts, or their substitutes’<sup>16</sup>), *кадауф* (Tur. *kadayif* ‘1. dry dough in a thread-like form, 2. confectionery made of this dough’), *реване* (Tur. *revani* ‘a kind of cake made of eggs, flour, and semolina, soaked in syrup’), *курабии* (Tur. *kurabye* ‘a type of dry cookies’), *локум* (Tur. *lokum* ‘confectionery made of potato starch, sugar, and glucose, usually in the form of cubes’). The names of confectionery products have an Arabic origin, but they found their way into the Bulgarian language (and other Slavic languages on the Balkan Peninsula) through Ottoman Turkish.

The Turkish culinary tradition has become so popular that dishes prepared in the style of the Orient have become an integral element of Christian tradition and customs. No wonder that the names of dishes prepared on the occasion of Christian holidays

<sup>15</sup> All explanations of meanings are based on definitions taken from the dictionary: *Речник на чуждите думи в българския език*, съст. Мария Филипова-Байрова, Симеон Бояджиев, Елена Машалова, Кирил Костов, София: Издателство на БАН, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> The name of the sesame flour used to make *challah* (sometimes a synonym for *halva*) – *tahan* – is an Arabic word that found its way into Bulgarian through Turkish.

are also borrowings from the Turkish language. The authors of the book *Старинни рецепти за празници и обреди* (Old recipes for holidays and rituals)<sup>17</sup> recommend preparing *сарми по манастирски*<sup>18</sup> (that is, “monastery-style sarma”) for Christmas Eve. On the festive Christmas table, there should be a *канама*<sup>19</sup> (Tur. *karapa* ‘stewed meat with onions’), and on New Year’s Day, a *сиропирана баница с локум* (that is, “dough in syrup with the addition of marshmallow”), as well as pork *кавърма* (Tur. *kavurma* ‘pieces of meat fried in its own fat’) and *пача* (Tur. *paça* ‘a dish of legs, head, etc.’).<sup>20</sup> There are many more such examples among the dishes typically made for various holidays. Todor Boyadzhiev, the author of the popular textbook *Българска лексикология* (Bulgarian lexicology), argued that Turkish linguistic influence had been gradually waning since the National Revival, and yet he listed a number of commonly used food names among examples of borrowing, including some that have not been mentioned here: *бюрек*, *пастърма*, *петмез*, *суджук*, *яхния*.<sup>21</sup> The name of the popular strong alcoholic drink *ракия* is also of Turkish origin (Tur. *raki*).

To close this list of culinary borrowings, let us add that many celebrations are accompanied by an outdoor meal that includes a spit-roasted lamb, called *чеверме* (Tur. *çevirme*, literally, “rotated”). It is an obligatory dish during the celebration of St. George’s Day, the patron saint of shepherds, whose cult is very strong in Bulgaria.<sup>22</sup>

The second large group of culinary-related lexis consists of the names of kitchen utensils. A large part of it is also borrowed from Turkish. An excellent source for excerpting this kind of vocabulary is Petko Slaveykov’s book entitled *Готварска книга или наставления за всякаквы гостбы според както ги правят в Цариград и разны домашны sprawy събраны от разны книги* (A cookbook, that is, tips on all kinds of dishes, according to how they make them in Tsarograd, and various household matters collected from various books).<sup>23</sup> It is regarded today as the first Bulgarian cookbook, although in fact, it is not about traditional Bulgarian dishes but about the cuisine of the various peoples living in Istanbul, the multi-cultural capital of the Ottoman Empire called Tsarograd. Slaveykov’s cookbook contains 289 recipes of various kinds, in addition to advice on selecting various products (especially meat and fish) and the ways to store and preserve them. By compiling recipes from a variety of sources (their diversity is reflected both in the stylistic layer of language, as well as in the level of detail of the recipes), the Bulgarian writer created a panorama of Istanbul’s culinary landscape in the second half of the 19th century, and, as if by the way – because he did not devote special attention to it – also a historical testimony

<sup>17</sup> Минева, Карданова, *Старинни рецепти...*

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, 64–7.

<sup>21</sup> Тодор Бояджиев, *Българска лексикология*, София: Наука и Изкуство, 1986, 201.

<sup>22</sup> The day dedicated in the Orthodox calendar to St. George (*Гергьовден*), i.e., May 6, is an official state holiday, a day off from work.

<sup>23</sup> Славейков, *Готварска книга...*

concerning cooking utensils, the ways in which they were used, and the activities that could be carried out with their help.

The names of kitchen utensils mentioned in Slaveykov's book have survived to the present day, finding no competition either among their native equivalents or among borrowings from other languages.

Since most of the dishes described by Slaveykov are heat-treated dishes, they are prepared on the stove or in the oven (*на печка, в печка*), sometimes referred to by the Greek lexeme *фурна*. Cooking on the stove, baking, boiling, braising, or frying food requires different types of pots, pans, and sometimes a grate. Among the most common names for cooking utensils mentioned by Slaveykov are lexemes that are also used today: *тенджерера* (Tur. *tencere* 'deep cooking pot') and *тава* (Tur. *tava* '1. a shallow, wide vessel used for baking, 2. a wide vessel for frying jam'). The latter name – *тава* – is translated by the *Podręczny słownik bułgarsko-polski* (Handy Bulgarian-Polish dictionary) as 'brytfanna, baking tray',<sup>24</sup> but this translation seems to be inaccurate. Used in the Balkans, *тава* is a type of cookware unheard of in Polish cuisine – it differs from a baking dish in that it does not have a lid, and its shape and depth are different from those of a baking tray. This is because it is round with a fairly high rim but without handles like our baking trays. It is very versatile and can be used to prepare quite sophisticated dishes using various methods (such as sautéing or braising), although most often *тава* is put into the oven and the dish is baked. Slaveykov devoted an entire chapter to the dishes prepared in this way, entitling it *За ястиета които се правят в тавы*. It includes recipes for both meat and fish, seafood, and vegetable dishes: *Месо в тава, Скабрица в тава, Миды в тава Патладжени в тава, Дроб (джигер<sup>25</sup>) в тава, Рыба хамсия в тава*.<sup>26</sup> *Тенджерера* (a pot) is used to cook or stew food, often under cover, i.e., *под капакът* (Tur. *kapak* 'lid').

The next two utensils needed for food preparation are *менсия* (Tur. *tepsi*) and *мас* (Tur. *tas*). The Bulgarian-Polish dictionary translates them respectively as 'baking tray'<sup>27</sup> and 'bowl'.<sup>28</sup> It seems, however, that these translations are not accurate and do not fully reflect the purpose and variety of objects described with these terms. While *менсия* does indeed encompass different types and forms of baking trays for baking something (e.g., *кадаифена менсия* is used specifically for baking sweets called *кадаиф*), Slaveykov also mentions *дълбока менсия*, which, according to him, was used for preparing food in a water bath, i.e., another vessel was put into it. *Тас*, on the other hand, can serve a variety of functions, not only those envisaged for bowls (e.g., in some recipes given by Slaveykov, it serves as a pot in which meat is cooked). Here,

<sup>24</sup> Franciszek Ślowski, *Podręczny słownik bułgarsko-polski z suplementem*, Vol. 2, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987, 1069.

<sup>25</sup> The borrowed name *джигер* (Tur. *ciğer*) is synonymous with the native word for liver. Its placement next to the native word may indicate that liver was more widely known under the borrowed name.

<sup>26</sup> Славейков, *Готварска книга*..., 41–3.

<sup>27</sup> Franciszek Ślowski, *Podręczny słownik*..., Vol. 2, 1078.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 1072.

the author probably meant a deep copper vessel, characteristic of the countries of Asia Minor, tapering slightly toward the top and equipped with a handle. This is confirmed by the definition in the online dictionary of the Bulgarian language:

*Тас* (пер.-тур.) 1. Дълбока медна паница [Deep copper bowl]. 2. Металически съд за гребане вода в баня [Metal vessel for taking up water].<sup>29</sup>

The vessels referred to by Slaveykov as *mac* must have been diverse since, in some places, he specified their name by describing their purpose (cf. *чорбян тас*). In modern restaurant cuisine in Bulgaria, dishes cooked in special shallow, usually iron pans, called *сачове*, have become popular. It seems they were not common among Bulgarians living at the end of the 19th century because the author explains the meaning of the word *сач* several times, giving its equivalents in brackets or italicizing it in print, e.g., “тесто [...], което като разточат, пекат на сач (връшник, железна черепия)” (p. 44); “ако сачът е меденъ по лесно става” (p. 46). Another popular type of pan is called *туган*, which in turn comes from the New Greek (Gr. τηγάνι). Essential utensils in Bulgarian cuisine are skewers and skewers for frying meats on the grill (*шии* and smaller *шиичета*). The term *шии* (Tur. *şiş*), borrowed from Turkish, not only means ‘a long metal rod used to roast meat over embers’ but is also the name of the food prepared in this way. A frequently used instrument is a wooden or metal mortar, or *хаван* (Tur. *havan*), and a pestle – *токмак* (Tur. *tokmak*), which is an integral part of it. If the pestle was a separate tool, it had to be made of boxwood (*чимширов/чимширен токмак*), which guaranteed its hardness and durability. The name used for boxwood (*чимшир*) is also of Turkish origin – it comes from Tur. *şimşir*, which in turn was adopted from Persian.

The names of some vessels for storing and serving wine are also of Turkish origin. Among them, the most popular is *дамаджана* (Tur. *damacana*), meaning ‘a sizable bottle, usually enclosed in wickerwork.’ Although the name of this vessel was adopted by the Turks from Italian (It. *damigiana*), its origin actually lies in the name of the Iranian city of Damghan. Thus, reviewing the names of kitchen utensils and dishes, we easily come to the conclusion that only individual pieces of cutlery have Slavic names: *лъжица* ← PS. *\*lъžьka*, *нож* ← PS. *\*nožь*, *вилница* ← PS. *\*vidla*.<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, verbs of Turkish origin were also used in the past to describe the activities performed in the kitchen during the preparation of meals. They were related to the preparation of specific dishes and were derived from their names, e.g., fry – *кавърдисвам* (cf. *кавърма*), chop – *кайдисвам* (cf. *кайма*), etc. They were still in use in the early 20th century, but over time, they were supplanted by Slavic equivalents and survived only in dialects.

<sup>29</sup> <https://ibl.bas.bg/rbe/lang/bg/тас> [accessed April 16, 2022].

<sup>30</sup> Wiesław Boryś, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008.

The overview of the culinary-related borrowings from Turkish used in Bulgarian today clearly shows that the “purification” of the latter language has not succeeded in all areas of life. Thus, Todor Boyadzhiev was not entirely right when he wrote that “Turkish lexical influence on the Bulgarian language began to wane during the Renaissance, more specifically when cultural life and education began to develop under the influence of Russia and Western Europe.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, colloquial language proved resistant to Western influence, and international lexis entered the salons but not the kitchen. The best evidence of this is the vocabulary excerpted from contemporary cookbooks discussed in this article.

## References

- Бояджиев Тодор, *Българска лексикология*, София: Наука и Изкуство, 1986.
- Геров Найдено, *Речник на българският език*, т. 1–5, Пловдив: Дружествена печатница «Съгласие», 1895–1905.
- Кръстева Весела, *Речник на турските думи в съвременния български печат*, София: Лаков Прес, 2000.
- Минева Елица, Карданова Татяна, *Старинни рецепти за празници и обреди. Над 200 питки и ястия от българската кухня*, София: СББ Медиа АД, 2020.
- Неофит Рилски, *Българска граматика*, фототипно издание, София: Наука и изкуство, 1984.
- Николова Надка, *Билингвизмът в българските земи през XV–XIX век*, Шумен: Университетско издателство «Епископ Константин Преславски», 2006.
- Павлов Иван, *Присъствия на храненето по българските земи през XV–XIX век*, София: Академично издателство «Проф. Марин Дринов», 2001.
- Петров Любомир, Йорданов Евгений, Узунова Снежана, Джелепов Николай, *Българска национална кухня*, София: Земиздат, 1983.
- Речник на чуждите думи в българския език*, съст. Мария Филипова-Байрова, Симеон Бояджиев, Елена Машалова, Кирил Костов, София: Издателство на БАН, 1993.
- Селимски Людвиг, “Турски елементи в българското словообразуване,” в *Творба речи и ъени ресурси у словенским језицима*, ред. Р. Драгићевић, Београд: Филолошки факултет Универзитета у Београду, 2012, 319–29.
- Славейков Петко, *Готварска книга или наставления за всякаквы гостбы според както гы правят в Цариград и разны домашны sprawy събраны от разны книги*, Цариград: Печатница на Македония, 1870 (reprint 2018, Ямбол: ИПК Светлина АД).
- Стаменов Максим, *Съдбата на турцизмите в българския език и в българската култура*, София: Изток-Запад, 2001.

Boryś Wiesław, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> “турското лексикално влияние върху българския език започва да отслабва през Възраждането и по-точно когато културният живот и просветното дело започват да се развиват под влиянието на Русия и Западна Европа.” Бояджиев, *Българска лексикология*, 201.

- Georgiewa-Okoń Jordanka, *Turczyzmy w bułgarskich dialektach południowo-wschodnich. Dialekty rodopskie i wschodnie dialekty rupskie*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2019.
- Grannes Alf, *Turco-Bulgarica. Articles in English and French Concerning Turkish Influence on Bulgarian*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996.
- Sławski Franciszek, *Podręczny słownik bułgarsko-polski z suplementem*, Vols. 1–2, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987.
- Solak Elżbieta, *Znaki szczególne. Językowe i wokółjęzykowe problemy bułgarskiego Odrodzenia*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2009.
- Walczak Mariola, *Język piśmiennictwa bułgarskiego. Zarys dziejów*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1998.
- Walczak-Mikołajczakowa Mariola, *Bułgarski Ezop*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2009.
- Walczak-Mikołajczakowa Mariola, Ivanova Diana, "O języku współczesnej prasy bułgarskiej i polskiej," in *Słowiańszczyzna w kontekście przemian Europy końca XX wiek. Język – tradycja – kultura*, ed. Emil Tokarz, Katowice: Śląsk, 2001, 306–12.

## **Aleksandar Vučić's Stabilocracy**

*Magdalena Reksć*

University of Lodz, Poland

e-mail: [magdalena.reksc@wsmip.uni.lodz.pl](mailto:magdalena.reksc@wsmip.uni.lodz.pl)

ORCID: 0000-0002-6927-5489

### **Abstract**

Stabilocracy is a term increasingly used by political scientists to describe the form of government in the Western Balkans. Generally speaking, a stabilocracy means the rule of autocratic leaders legitimizing power with slogans about the stability they are supposed to guarantee. This article shows the mechanisms of functioning of stabilocracies on the example of Serbia under the rule of Aleksandar Vučić.

### **Keywords**

Serbia, stabilocracy, Aleksandar Vučić, Western Balkans, Belgrade Waterfront

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the term “stabilocracy” has appeared more and more frequently, both in the West and in the Balkans, in political science studies and in numerous analyses of the condition of Balkan democracies, their deepening crises, and pathologies. Generally speaking, stabilocracy is understood as the specific nature of hybrid regimes ruled by autocrats with authoritarian tendencies, who legitimize their power through widely publicized stabilization and vague promises of prosperity and progress. Such slogans easily reach the electorate when the media are subordinated to those in power and when they are also given credit by Western leaders, who treat the Balkan satraps as guarantors of stability in the region, even if they openly violate democratic procedures.

It is assumed that the word stabilocracy was first used by Antoinette Primatarova and Johanna Deimel in a study on Albania. They defined it as a neologism intended to “describe a system that provides stability externally but that oscillates between democracy and autocratic tendencies internally.”<sup>1</sup> Over time, experts on the region began to use this term to refer to Kosovo, Montenegro ruled by the DPS (Demokratska partija socijalista Crne Gore) headed by Milo Đukanović, Macedonia under the rule of Nikola Gruevski, and more recently Serbia under the rule of Aleksandar Vučić. Florian Bieber explains the mechanism of operation of such systems: those in power assure that they guarantee stability and declare that they want their country to join the European Union, but in reality, their power is based on informal clientelistic practices, full control of the media, and the permanent triggering of crises that undermine the principles of democracy and the rule of law.<sup>2</sup> According to the researcher, it was the authoritarian governments of the 1990s that paved the way for similar practices in the 21st century.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this article is to examine a Serbian case study in order to show the authoritarian-populist tendencies of its leader, as well as the public's reaction to such a style of governance. The research is based on a qualitative analysis of Serbian official discourse and the author's fieldwork in Serbia. Serbia serves as a representative case that can illustrate the nature of stabilocracy.

Most of the topics discussed here find analogies in the other countries in the region. Analysts agree that the stability of stabilocracies is an illusion, as at some point, the long-accumulated social frustration is manifested. This is well illustrated by the example of Macedonia where, after Nikola Gruevski was removed from power in 2016, a new cabinet could not be elected for more than a year, as the former team continued to control key state institutions, including the Constitutional Court.

### Establishing a Stabilocracy in Serbia

Aleksandar Vučić, Minister of Information in Mirko Marjanović's government between 1998 and 2000, i.e., during the declining phase of the Slobodan Milošević era, and later one of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka, SNS), was appointed Prime Minister of Serbia in 2014 and has held the office of the President since 2017. This skillful politician has successively consolidated his power, aided in large part by taking control of the media and thus limiting the dissemination of alternative messages, which now reach only a few people, usually better-educated

---

<sup>1</sup> Antoinette Primatarova, Johanna Deimel, *Bridge Over Troubled Waters? The Role of the Internationals in Albania*, Sofia: Centre for Liberal Strategies, 2012, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Florian Bieber, “The Rise (and Fall) of Balkan Stabilocracies,” *Horizons* 10 (2018), <https://www.cirsd.org/en/horizons/horizons-winter-2018-issue-no-10/the-rise-and-fall-of-balkan-stabilocracies> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>3</sup> Idem, *Uspon autoritarizma na Zapadnom Balkanu*, transl. Đorđe Tomić, Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2020, 18.



inhabitants of large cities. It is telling that even the B92 platform, an independent communications channel under Milošević's regime that supported protests against the dictator, has been subordinated to Vučić. N1 TV (the Balkan branch of CNN) or the *Danas* newspaper reach only a small audience.

In a situation where the media are almost fully controlled, the average Serb is surrounded by an unambiguous message loudly proclaiming the president's achievements and praising his economic successes and visionary foreign policy based on a skillful balancing between Russia and the European Union and on an increasingly visible (especially during the pandemic) cooperation with China.

It is worth mentioning that Serbian society is not a monolith. As in all societies undergoing a transformation – but also in Western countries – there is a clear division into those who support pluralism, tolerance for otherness, and democratic and civic values and those oriented toward national defenders of tradition. While the former, a minority, express their opposition to the president's autocratic policy, the latter believe or want to believe Vučić's populist promises, after long years of continuous crisis. They hope for the consolidation of a "little stability" and the development of the country, especially thanks to the "steel friendship with China," which will be discussed later.

Although the Serbian constitution provides for a parliamentary-cabinet system of government, with highly limited powers of the head of state, in practice Vučić remains the main decision-maker, whereas Prime Minister Ana Brnabić plays a minor role. One can even find here an analogy to the period of the 1990s when Milošević's strong position resulted "not so much from systemic premises as from personality and contextual premises."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it seems that Brnabić's nomination was an excellent political play made by Vučić because Brnabić, who openly declares her homosexual orientation, on the one hand, supports the promotion of the positive image of Serbia as a modern and tolerant country in the West, while on the other hand, her lack of political experience and political base helps strengthen the president's position.<sup>5</sup>

It is Vučić who is the most important hero of the subordinate mass media, which constantly reproduce materials about the president's achievements, ceremonial openings of new investments, or new "gifts" from Chinese brothers. Because of this, most Serbs, deprived of access to alternative media, are inundated with information about a continuous streak of successes, progressive expansion, state-of-the-art investments,<sup>6</sup> and "the region's greatest economic growth,"<sup>7</sup> although independent

<sup>4</sup> Przemysław Żukiewicz, *Pozycja ustrojowa rządu w państwach postjugosłowiańskich. Analiza prawnoporównawcza*, Wrocław: Instytut Politologii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Dejan Anastasijevic, *Hard Days Ahead for Serbia's Gay PM*, June 19, 2017, <https://euobserver.com/beyond-brussels/138265> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>6</sup> *Predsednik Vučić obišao radove na delu brze pruge Beograd – Budimpešta*, May 30, 2020, <https://www.predsednik.rs/lat/pres-centar/vesti/predsednik-vucic-obisao-radove-na-delu-brze-pruge-beograd-budimpesta> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>7</sup> See *Vučić: Srbija je na dobrom putu i napreduje*, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/2531888/vucic-srbija-je-stabilna-napreduje-i-bezbednosno-je-stabilna.html> [accessed March 10,

experts talk about stagnation.<sup>8</sup> The alleged progress (*napredak*) is possible thanks to controversial foreign investments by China or the United Arab Emirates.

What is more, social inequalities are growing in Serbia (as in other stabilocracies), as entrepreneurs with ties to the authorities gradually increase their wealth, while the rest of the society does not feel any improvement in their situation. Serbian income disparities are said to be among the highest in Europe.<sup>9</sup> Not only is the government doing nothing to counter this phenomenon, it is actually helping to strengthen the oligarchic system. As noted earlier, strong clientelistic relations emerge in stabilocracies. Such relations are typical of scarcity economies,<sup>10</sup> and we encounter such economies in Southeastern Europe. Writing about clientelism in sub-Saharan Africa, Anna Radłowska argues that it increases existing inequalities and that we can speak of a “vicious circle” since the phenomenon caused by disparities deepens them more and more.<sup>11</sup> It is no different in Serbia where, on the one hand, there is an increase in the offer of luxury goods, which only 10% of the country’s population can afford,<sup>12</sup> and on the other hand, a significant part of the society lives below the poverty level, which also affects people who have a job.<sup>13</sup> According to the popular view, Chinese investments and aid helped reduce the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic,<sup>14</sup> although one may wonder about the transparency of these subsidies.<sup>15</sup> For example, the famous shipment of Chinese medicines and medical equipment to fight the pandemic in March 2020, described at

---

2023]; Anica Telesković, *Najveći rast u regionu*, June 22, 2018, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/406017/Najveci-rast-u-regionu> [accessed March 10, 2023]; Radio Slobodna Evropa, *Mit o najvećem ekonomskom rastu na Balkanu*, February 27, 2019, [https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=424422364766175&\\_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=424422364766175&_rdr) [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>8</sup> Slađana Gluščević, *Srbija ekonomski stagnira – Od standarda EU udaljena najmanje 50 godina*, August 5, 2018, <http://voice.org.rs/srbija-ekonomski-stagnira-od-standarda-eu-udaljena-najmanje-50-godina/> [accessed March 10, 2023]; Radio Slobodna Evropa, *Mit...*

<sup>9</sup> Mihail Arandarenko, Gorana Krstić, Jelena Žarković Rakić, *Analysing Income Inequality in Serbia. From Data to Policy*, Belgrade: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2017, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/belgrad/14010.pdf> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>10</sup> Krzysztof Nowakowski, “Klientelizm jako forma korupcji,” *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny* 1 (2007), 214–5, 219–23.

<sup>11</sup> Anna Radłowska, “Klientelizm jako czynnik wpływający na wzrost rozwarstwienia ekonomicznego w państwach Afryki Subsaharyjskiej,” *Forum Politologiczne* 12 (2011), 509.

<sup>12</sup> *Jaz između bogatih i siromašnih u Srbiji najveći u Evropi*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.021.rs/story/Info/Srbija/179810/Jaz-izmedju-bogatih-i-siromasnih-u-Srbiji-najveci-u-Evropi.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>13</sup> *Stopa rizika od siromastva u Srbiji viša nego u svim EU državama*, February 18, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200222085241/http://rs.n1info.com:80/Vesti/a461423/Siromastvo-zaposlenih-u-Srbiji.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>14</sup> Andreas Mihm, „Wir sind die Nummer eins in Europa“, February 4, 2021, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/warum-serbien-so-gut-durch-die-corona-krise-gekommen-ist-17176274.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>15</sup> Mijat Lakičević, *Srbija i Kina: Koliko nas košta čelično prijateljstvo*, May 1, 2019, <https://pescanik.net/srbija-i-kina-koliko-nas-kosta-celicino-prijateljstvo/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

the time by the Prime Minister as a “purchase and donation,” turned out to be more of an EU-funded purchase.<sup>16</sup>

### The Illusion of Stability

The concept of stabilocracy refers to the stabilization supposedly guaranteed by such regimes. These are however merely slogans, because, as Bieber rightly pointed out, stabilocracies do not bring stabilization at all, and even lead to destabilization.<sup>17</sup> Primatarova and Deimel in the above-mentioned article on Albania explain that Albania joined NATO in 2009 and applied for EU membership, which can be seen as a success in international politics and a strengthening of stability in the region. At the same time, however, since 2009, the country has witnessed a growing internal impasse, stagnation, and violation of democratic standards.<sup>18</sup> Bieber emphasizes that stabilocracies cyclically create tensions with their neighbors because crises suit them, making it easy to justify ruling with a strong hand.<sup>19</sup> The observation of the researcher from Luxembourg explains to a large extent why politicians in the Western Balkans periodically generate tensions that, while quickly defused, result in the constant accumulation of further layers of negative emotions, which at some point may lead to various forms of destabilization in the region.

The abovementioned strategy is effectively used by Vučić, who provokes diplomatic crises from time to time, mainly with Croatia and Kosovo. There is no room to describe subsequent episodes from the long chain of minor and major disagreements and misunderstandings, but it is worth emphasizing that this populist politician in his cynical games instrumentally uses the Serb minority in neighboring countries, although he officially proclaims the need to protect it. The tactic of permanently arousing antagonisms between neighbors was vividly depicted by former Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić (commenting in 2018 on one of the installments in a series of tensions on the Belgrade-Zagreb line, this time caused by the recognition of Serbian and Croatian defense ministers as *persona non grata*) when he spoke of a farce carefully directed by both countries.<sup>20</sup> He warned that at some point, these orchestrated tensions, triggered by

<sup>16</sup> Iva Martinović, *Zašto opada uverenje građana Srbije da je Kina najveći donator?*, April 15, 2021, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/zasto-opada-uverenje-gradjana-srbije-da-je-kina-najveci-donator/31205609.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>17</sup> Bieber, “The Rise...”

<sup>18</sup> Primatarova, Deimel, *Bridge...*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Bieber, “The Rise...”; idem, *Uspon autoritarizma...*, 139–40.

<sup>20</sup> *Kriza u odnosima Hrvatske i Srbije je režirana farsa, ali postoji opasnost da se neka vatra i zapali*, April 29, 2018, <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/bivsi-srbijanski-ministar-vanjskih-poslova-jeremic-novu-krizu-izmedju-srbije-i-hrvatske-nazvao-reziranom-farsom---515445.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

public support, could get out of hand,<sup>21</sup> which once again confirms that stabilocracies do not guarantee stability in the Balkans.

Returning to the topic of Vučić's Serbia, it should be noted that the incumbent president repeats the slogans of stability not only in relation to the economic situation but also domestic politics and the country's position in the international arena. Tales of a stable exchange rate dominated the 2017 election campaign when the then prime minister, running for the position of head of state, asserted that only his victory would guarantee the continuation of Serbia's previous stable course. He argued that his election would mean stabilization, while the victory of the opposition would lead to chaos and paralysis of the state, much like in neighboring Macedonia. Such arguments sounded logical because, at that time, the political crisis in Skopje was prolonged after VMRO-DPMNE was removed from power in 2016.

In an aggressive, dirty campaign, in which he pretended to be a statesman, Vučić called his opponents thieves, ridiculed them, and accused them of not caring about the good of the state.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, journalists working for the state media openly supported him and favored him over other candidates. One of the campaign ads, showing a plane in which two pilots fiercely argued about which direction of flight to choose, seems very symptomatic. Vučić explained to the audience from aboard the plane that a similar situation would occur in Serbia should the president and prime minister come from different political camps and that the country would then lose the stable course it had maintained so far.<sup>23</sup>

Such a campaign strategy, completely different from Western standards, devoid of elementary principles of fair play and disavowing the idea of cohabitation, turned out to be very effective, as Vučić won in the first round, gaining over 55% of the votes. Such a high result was determined by many factors, including the weakness and fragmentation of the opposition, full control over the media market, and fears among state sector employees about losing their jobs as a result of the change in power. It is worth emphasizing the reference to the specifically understood stability coupled with a lack of respect for democratic rules, insulting political opponents, and a low level of political culture and public debate.<sup>24</sup> It is significant that the Serbs, like other societies in the region, do not trust the political class and state institutions.<sup>25</sup> Disappointed with the attitude of those in power and aware of their lack of respect, they prove willing to vote for them again, believing that they are choosing the lesser of two evils.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> Omer Karabeg, *Zašto Vučić potcenjuje inteligenciju građana Srbije?*, March 19 2017, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/most-vucic-izbori-gradjani-inteligencija/28377656.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9zohYKzpZI> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>24</sup> Vladimir Veljković, *Stabilocracy and Political Crisis*, November 14, 2017, <https://pescanik.net/stabilocracy-and-political-crisis/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>25</sup> Vesna Pešić, *Divlje društvo. Kako smo stigli dovdje*, Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2012, 215–9.

An average person, deprived of access to alternative sources of information, surrounded only by those controlled by the authorities, even if they do not fully trust them and criticize them, eventually succumbs to the propaganda about stability and the threat of destabilization once the opposition seizes power; the opposition that, by the way, is weak, divided, and lacks a concrete program of action. This was evident during the elections in June 2020 when the “Aleksandar Vučić – For Our Children” (“Aleksandar Vučić – Za našu decu”) coalition won as much as 60.65% of the votes, also as a result of the boycott of voting by some of the opposition parties. It should be added that the successive victories of the ruling camp are due to many reasons, such as, for example, the practice of forming broad coalitions consisting of small groups, thanks to which various social groups (e.g., pensioners) feel they are voting for their representatives; or organizing several elections at the same time (for example, in June 2020, in addition to deputies to Skupština, representatives to the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and politicians at the local level were also elected).<sup>26</sup> This procedure increases the likelihood that a voter will vote for the same party, which suits the party in power. Another popular strategy for winning elections – not only in Serbia but throughout the Balkans – is the so-called Bulgarian vote-buying train. Activists distribute filled-out ballots among voters, who use them instead of the blank ones, which they pass on to the activists to be filled out and given to the next voter.<sup>27</sup> This practice was recorded in Serbia in the 2016 and 2020 parliamentary elections. Even if one admits that it is not a widespread phenomenon, it does not reflect well on Vučić’s regime.

The president seems to realize that appealing to the fear of the chaos that would allegedly follow the opposition’s victory is not enough because a society frustrated by the prolonged economic crisis (even if the media claim that the situation is improving) may nevertheless trust the opposition. Therefore, in addition to the threat of a worsening of the situation in the event of his opponents taking power or the narrative about stable growth, Vučić’s rhetoric also includes hope for future development. And so, during the campaign accompanying the local elections in March 2018 in the capital, where the so-called “second Serbia” – i.e., liberal, anti-nationalist, and anti-populist Serbia – is relatively strong (compared to the rest of the country), those in power seemed to be aware that promises of a better tomorrow were needed for success. Therefore, it was assured that under the rule of politicians from Vučić’s group, the city would develop impressively, which was additionally supported by the song *Prestonica nade* (Capital of hope), which celebrated the charms of Belgrade as a city friendly to its inhabitants, full of happiness and prospects for young people.<sup>28</sup> Although these were vague promises, not supported by concrete action plans, the “Aleksandar Vučić – Because We Love

---

<sup>26</sup> *Izbori 2020: Raspisani izbori u Srbiji – ko može da glasa i za koga*, March 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-51733902> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>27</sup> Bieber, *Uspori autoritarizma...*, 169.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5p-bjNUz1Y> [accessed September 25, 2021].

Belgrade!” (“Aleksandar Vučić – zato što volimo Beograd!”) won 44.99% of the votes, which gave it an absolute majority in the local parliament.<sup>29</sup>

The same strategy was used in the 2020 elections. The Serbian Progressive Party formed a bloc with its coalition partners. Their slogan, “Aleksandar Vučić – For Our Children,” clearly indicated that the country would have a great future under this party’s rule. The campaign ad spread a meaningful message, showing the president, together with a little girl, building a town out of Lego blocks, which was to be a metaphor for Serbia under his leadership.<sup>30</sup> Once again, Serbian voters saw no clear success agenda or a concrete plan of action; instead, they were offered another string of populist slogans. The fact that Vučić himself played a central role in these elections, even though they were not presidential elections, was not rationalized. Yet again, appealing to voters’ collective emotions had the desired effect, as the coalition emerged as the clear winner, even if the results were not entirely fair.

### Belgrade Waterfront

The reflection on the topic of Serbia under Vučić’s rule must include a reference to the Belgrade Waterfront project, a promise he made before the elections in 2012. The project, which is planned to be completed in 30 years and is estimated to cost USD 3.5 billion, is financed with investor money from the United Arab Emirates, which is flowing in under non-transparent circumstances.<sup>31</sup> The promised transformation of the capital appears surreal in the visualizations, which envisage a large business and service center with luxury apartments that poor Serbs can only dream of or the Belgrade Tower, modeled on Dubai’s Burj al-Arab skyscraper.<sup>32</sup>

As Marek Matyjanka writes, this initiative is a grotesque mixture of corruption, megalomania, wild privatization, and social harm.<sup>33</sup> It should be added that the Belgrade Waterfront project contradicts the city’s development plans and can be treated as one of the many proofs of the arrogance of politicians, who do not heed the strong opposition of experts. The Serbian Academy of Architecture has been protesting against the project from the very beginning, along with the intellectual, cultural, and

<sup>29</sup> *Konačni rezultati: SNS-u 44,99 odsto, lista oko Dilasa 18,93*, March 5, 2018, <https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/a369485-konacni-rezultati-beogradskih-izbora-2018/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKhXbM4uN9w> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Surk, “To Build Dubai of the Balkans, Serbia Deploys Bulldozers and Baseball Bats,” *The New York Times*, April 29, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/world/europe/serbia-belgrade-waterfront-uae-aleksandar-vucic.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>32</sup> Guy Delauney, *Controversy Surrounds Belgrade Waterfront Development*, June 21, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-36576420> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>33</sup> Marek Matyjanka, *Belgrad na wodzie*, June 27, 2017, <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/belgrad-na-wodzie/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

artistic elites who oppose the government, and many residents who refuse to accept the autocratic and arrogant policies of Vučić or the demolition of old buildings and the eviction of their inhabitants.

It is often emphasized that the project was not consulted with the public or specialists, and that building permits were not issued in the traditional, legal way. Moreover, the implementation of the controversial investment entails the demolition of the historic Savamala district, which in recent years has been transformed into an alternative space that attracts artists, including Western ones, leading some to predict that Belgrade would become a second Berlin. Recently, another metaphor describing the Serbian capital as the Dubai of the Balkans can be heard more and more often, which aptly captures the nature of the whole idea. Tana Prelec, a Balkanist from the London School of Economics, notes that the political cultures of Serbia and the UAE are in some ways compatible, that Arab sultanism meets Balkan authoritarianism.<sup>34</sup> Even if this is a far-reaching comparison, it is hard not to agree that the behavior of most Serbian (and other post-Yugoslav) politicians is – unfortunately – far from Western standards.

The revitalization of the Savamala district, modeled on European trends, collided with a megalomaniacal vision of peculiarly understood development and progress, laced with corruption. The most striking example of the latter was the incident in April 2016 when under the cover of darkness, a group of masked men demolished, without prior notice, buildings next to Hercegovačka Street, located in the immediate vicinity of the juggernaut under construction. The circumstances of the incident have not been clarified to this day, nor has anyone been found responsible for the destruction of private property, which clearly shows the functioning of the justice system in the state ruled by Vučić.<sup>35</sup> One can only guess that the authorities wanted the buildings to be removed quickly because the legal process of resettling the residents could have dragged on for many years.<sup>36</sup>

This event mobilized many Belgrade residents to take to the streets, but several demonstrations were unable to stop the gigantic venture. A spontaneously formed election committee of the opponents of the “flooding” of Belgrade failed to reach the 5% electoral threshold.<sup>37</sup> It is worth mentioning that the Serbian capital is inhabited by the majority of the supporters of the so-called “second Serbia,” i.e., a democratic, civic Serbia opposed to nationalist populism. Accordingly, the polarization of political positions is most evident in this city.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Surk, “To Build Dubai...”

<sup>35</sup> Marija Ignjatijević, *The Collapse of the Rule of Law in Serbia: the “Savamala” Case*, May 17, 2016, <https://pointpulse.bezbednost.org/magazine/collapse-rule-law-serbia-savamala-case/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>36</sup> *Slučaj Hercegovačka: Ko je odlučio da bude srušena*, May 24, 2016, <https://www.koreni.rs/slucaj-hercegovačka-ko-je-odlucio-da-bude-srusena/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>37</sup> *Konačni rezultati...*

<sup>38</sup> Piotr Piotrowski, *Agorafilia. Sztuka i demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Poznań: Rebis, 2010, 286.

It is hard not to get the impression that the concept of the Belgrade Waterfront, aside from the financial benefits for a narrow class of decision-makers, was perfectly in line with the hopes and expectations of the majority of Serbs disappointed with their indefinitely prolonged existence on the periphery of Europe. The disintegration of Yugoslavia hurt Belgrade, once viewed as a local metropolis or the Paris of the Balkans. Hyperinflation, sanctions, and isolation in the international arena, and later the NATO bombing and the prolonged economic crisis, had significantly impoverished the city, whose inhabitants were envious of the changes taking place in Warsaw, Bratislava, and Bucharest. A BBC correspondent seems to be right in claiming that the Belgrade Waterfront is meeting public expectations for an influx of investments and infrastructure development.<sup>39</sup> Visualizations of the planned facilities along the long strip from Kalemegdan to the Belgrade Fair headquarters give the impression of progress, feed illusions of development and catching up with the West, and respond to the demand for foreign investments. All the more so since those in power constantly emphasize that thanks to the project, Belgrade will become a “world metropolis.”<sup>40</sup>

People who draw their knowledge from the media controlled by Vučić are unwilling to see that the much-publicized initiative is not designed for their benefit; that the average Serb will never be able to afford an apartment or rent a unit in the new skyscrapers; that only exclusive apartments are being built when what Belgrade lacks is low-cost housing.

The sad detail that the “world metropolis” will serve only the rich is evidenced by the fact that the historic main train station located in the vicinity of the Belgrade Waterfront was closed in 2018 and that there are plans to relocate the main bus station too. Belgrade authorities say that the new transport hubs will be modern, clean, and more efficient. The alternative locations contradict the plans for the expansion of transport in the capital, created since the 1970s.<sup>41</sup> As a result of this peculiar policy, the city of 1.5 million inhabitants does not have a subway, a train station in the historic center, and the still existing bus station looks as if it has not changed since 1966 when it was first put into operation.

Vučić and his entourage seem to have begun to realize that there is growing disappointment among Serbs over the lack of well-thought-out transportation solutions in the city, especially since many of them have seen the infrastructure in Western metropolises, either with their own eyes or on the Internet or the mass media. This feeling is exacerbated by the fact that there is currently a lot of talk in the world about smart cities, i.e., cities that take care of sustainable development, the environment, public transport, or human resources using IT technology. Also, in this case, the

---

<sup>39</sup> Delauney, *Controversy...*

<sup>40</sup> *Beograd će postati svetska metropola, tvrdi gradonačelnik Siniša Mali*, April 10, 2016, <https://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/beograd/2106671-beograd-cc-postati-svetska-metropola-tvr-di-gradonacelnik-sinisa-mali> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>41</sup> Karlo Polak, *Glavnoj železničkoj stanici je mesto u centru grada*, February 5, 2018, <https://www.danas.rs/beograd/glavnoj-zeleznickoj-stanici-je-mesto-u-centru-grada/> [accessed March 10, 2023].



politicians' response to the expectations of the public was the much-debated plan to build a gondola lift connecting Belgrade's Kalemegdan Fortress with the other side of the river, which, according to the authorities, would become a tourist attraction of the city, as well as help to relieve traffic jams in the center of the capital.

This project raises a lot of controversies and faces unequivocal opposition from expert and scientific circles, which emphasize that the construction will destroy the cultural heritage of the historic building. Besides, the manner in which the building permit for the lift was issued is also controversial.<sup>42</sup> As in the case of the Belgrade Waterfront, it is not only the elites who are protesting against the construction of the "air tram" but also ordinary residents, who do not agree with Vučić's autocratic policy. The felling of trees in the park in Ušće and Kalemegdan (located on the route of the planned gondola lift), which was carried out "quietly," was strongly criticized, as was the demolition of houses in the Savamala district in 2016. This time, too, public opposition faded quickly, and the protests were continued only by a small group of activists.<sup>43</sup>

In April 2019, an administrative court ordered the archaeological works in the area of the planned railway to be stopped, which will probably delay its construction, especially since the Serbian authorities have a new idea for modernizing the city's public transport – building a subway. This concept is not new, as it first appeared in 1958 and has been revisited many times.<sup>44</sup> The problem is that the plans for the new lines are contrary to the old ones and raise a lot of controversies since more stations are planned around the Belgrade Waterfront than in the center, to which many Belgrade people travel every day.<sup>45</sup>

### Aleksandar Vučić's Foreign Policy

The incumbent president's success in securing support is also due to his deftly conducted foreign policy. Without going into an in-depth reflection on this subject, it

<sup>42</sup> Vučić o gondoli: Biće to najlepša atrakcija Beograda, opozicija ne zna gde je Beogradska tvrđava, May 3, 2019, [https://insajder.net/sr/sajt/vazno/14317/Vu%C4%8Di%C4%87-o-gondoli-Bi%C4%87e-to-najlep%C5%A1a-atrakcija-Beograda-opozicija-ne-zna-gde-je-Beogradskatvr%C4%91ava.htm?fbclid=IwAR2JUx\\_EaJILBUUoCXhzAo4Eq4JPRKWwLOQ9Wi3R1c\\_2KKR-gl6m3-eC3cIo](https://insajder.net/sr/sajt/vazno/14317/Vu%C4%8Di%C4%87-o-gondoli-Bi%C4%87e-to-najlep%C5%A1a-atrakcija-Beograda-opozicija-ne-zna-gde-je-Beogradskatvr%C4%91ava.htm?fbclid=IwAR2JUx_EaJILBUUoCXhzAo4Eq4JPRKWwLOQ9Wi3R1c_2KKR-gl6m3-eC3cIo) [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>43</sup> *Građani sadili drveće na mestu posećenog u parku Ušće*, March 16, 2019, <https://novimagazin.rs/vesti/194390-gradjani-sadili-drvece-na-mestu-posecenog-u-parku-use> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>44</sup> *Beogradski metro i obećanja: „Prva linija od 2028. godine“ – koliko je puta do sada Beograd trebalo da dobije metro*, January 22, 2021, <https://www.danas.rs/bbc-news-serbian/beogradski-metro-i-obecanja-prva-linija-od-2028-godine-koliko-je-puta-do-sada-beograd-trebalo-da-dobije-metro/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>45</sup> *Svi problemi zamišljenih trasa metroa u Beogradu*, February 13, 2020, <https://direktno.rs/beograd/252758/svi-problemi-zamisljenih-trasa-metroa-u-beogradu.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

should only be pointed out that Vučić has skillfully maneuvered between the European Union and Russia from the very beginning. The belief that Serbia's value lies in its specific geopolitical position between the East and the West, which should be used in diplomatic salons, has been exploited by Serbian political elites (of various options). No wonder that most Serbs like it when Vučić is one day received in European salons as a guarantor of stability in the Balkans, and soon after, goes to Moscow to watch the parade on the anniversary of the end of World War II alongside Vladimir Putin.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the two vectors of foreign policy mentioned above, there are also more oriental partners, such as China or the United Arab Emirates. More than one separate article could be devoted to the developing cooperation between Belgrade and Beijing. Let us just note that this asymmetrical relationship, which intensified in the era of the coronavirus pandemic, further strengthens the position of the president, who emphasizes that thanks to Chinese aid (not only medical), the country has come through this difficult period in a relatively steady way.<sup>47</sup>

The president's international activity may be pleasing, especially when it is shown in the media that is completely subordinate to the government. Ivan Čolović, analyzing years ago the phenomenon of public support for Slobodan Milošević, noticed that he perfectly sensed the yearning for a strong leader, just as Josip Broz Tito had been portraying himself.<sup>48</sup> It is hard not to get the impression that a similar strategy has been adopted by Vučić, especially since not only Serbs but all post-Yugoslav societies fondly recall the days of the SFRY "empire," which counted on the international arena and whose head of state was seen as one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement and also as one of the great world leaders.<sup>49</sup> Today, Vučić plays on these tendencies by promoting himself as a leader with whom key non-European actors meet and negotiate. An important element of such narratives was the celebration in Belgrade of the 60th anniversary of the Movement's founding, planned for October 2021.

The incumbent president is able to take advantage of the mixture of national pride and peripherality complex with regard to the West that is present among Serbs; he knows what rhetoric to adopt in order to fit Serbian collective representations and, at the same time, gain the trust of the outside world, for example, by recognizing the crime in Srebrenica as genocide or appointing an openly homosexual person as prime minister.

---

<sup>46</sup> Vučić otkrio šta mu je Putin šapnuo tokom parade u Moskvi, May 5, 2018, <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vucic-otkrio-sta-mu-je-putin-sapnuo-tokom-parade-u-moskvi/1n9jr0f> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yjDZuVDHtY> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>48</sup> Ivan Čolović, *Dubina. Članci i intervjui 1991–2001*, Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2001, 28–31; idem, *Bordel ratnika. Folklor, politika, rat*, Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2007, 34–6.

<sup>49</sup> Davor Džalto, "Jugoslavija. Snovi i strvarnost," in Noam Čomski, *Jugoslavija. Mir, rat i raspad*, Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2019, 24–5; Magdalena Reksć, *Wyobrażenia zbiorowe społeczeństw byłej Jugosławii w XXI wieku. Perspektywa politologiczna*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019, 374–5.

The pro-government media create the image of a dynamic, decisive leader who talks “as an equal” with other leaders in diplomatic salons, which results in the strengthening of Belgrade’s international position.<sup>50</sup> In practice, however, nothing has changed under Vučić’s rule. Small, poor Serbia is perceived externally as a market and a key player in the remote, “peripheral,” “adventurous,” but geopolitically important Balkans, hence it is worth talking to it and trying to bring it under one’s influence while pursuing one’s own interests.

### Between Official Propaganda and Reality

Little has changed in terms of the country’s development and infrastructure modernization. As explained earlier, megalomaniacal projects are not intended for ordinary people but are primarily meant to serve those in power and the financial elite associated with them. Besides, they are located in the capital, while little is happening in other cities, and the province is sinking into apathy. For years, experts and analysts have been complaining about Belgrade’s hegemony and lack of well-thought-out concepts of sustainable development, introducing the notions of “Belgradeization of Serbia” (*beogradizacija Srbije*) or “Belgrade narcissism” (*beonarcizam*).<sup>51</sup> The pro-government media talk a lot about Chinese investments as a hope for a rapid modernization of the country, especially since Beijing’s aid is not subject to any conditions. And although independent experts warn that China is not helping selflessly, that it is also trying to play up its geopolitical interests, and point out the dangers and pitfalls of debt diplomacy,<sup>52</sup> Chinese investments are welcomed by the poorer part of the society, and thanks to them, politicians can claim that the country is changing for the better.

Meanwhile, as has already been emphasized, Serbia has one of the largest disparities in Europe, and Vučić’s rule is further widening the gap between the rich and the poor. The aforementioned contrasts also apply to infrastructure, water supply networks, sewage systems, etc.<sup>53</sup> It is significant that every year, there are local floods, during which the surrounding towns are evacuated and their inhabitants lose their property. Disasters of this type are evidence of a weak flood protection system. It is hard not to get the impression that Belgrade has not learned its lesson from the tragic events

<sup>50</sup> See *Doček za Vučića u Pekingu uz gardu kineske vojske*, April 24, 2019, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/ci/story/1/politika/3500158/docek-za-vucica-u-pekingu-uz-gardu-kineske-vojske.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>51</sup> Tanja Petrović, *Srbija i njen jug. „Južnjački dijalekti” između jezika, kulture i politike*, Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, 2015, 11.

<sup>52</sup> *Kineske investicije i balkanske glavobolje*, April 11, 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kineske-investicije-i-doma%C4%87e-glavobolje/29874983.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>53</sup> Jelena Žarković, *Mapa podeljene Srbije*, April 1, 2019, <https://pescanik.net/mapa-podeljene-srbije/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

of 2014 when water caused enormous damage throughout the region, even though it received funds from the European Union for the modernization of the flood protection infrastructure.<sup>54</sup> Given the high level of corruption and the widespread practice of stealing public money, it can be assumed that much of the funds provided by Brussels have not been spent as intended.

No wonder the Serbs do not hide their disappointment at the prolonged stagnation, even if many of them want to believe the state propaganda of successes and economic growth. The reality brutally shows the weakness of the state, its economy, and institutions. It is significant that Vučić, although enjoying the support of nearly two-thirds of the population according to official data,<sup>55</sup> is sometimes widely criticized, together with the entire political class. The problem is that these negative opinions do not translate into electoral decisions because, as has already been explained, the mastery of the incumbent president lies in creating the belief that the taking of power by the opposition will significantly worsen the current situation. However, such a tactic seems short-sighted, as the public's faith has its limits, and at some point, a deep crisis and progressive disappointment will have to erupt, as was the case in Macedonia after the outbreak of the wiretapping scandal in 2015.

For a moment, it seemed that the Vučić regime was nearing its end when, at the turn of 2018 and 2019, Serbs began to take to the streets *en masse* to protest against the assault on opposition politician Borko Stefanović. Although the perpetrators of the attack were arrested, the opponents of the incumbent president had no doubts about who was behind the brutal beating. People spoke explicitly about an assassination attempt. The leader of the People's Party (Narodna stranka), Vuk Jeremić, even called on EU politicians not to ignore the incident, directly suggesting that the behavior of those in power did not meet the standards of a democratic state of law.<sup>56</sup> A large part of the public seemed to be of the same opinion since it regularly took part in demonstrations under the slogan "Against Violence – Stop Bloody Shirts" ("Protiv nasilja – Stop krvavim košuljama"). The outrage of the protesters intensified after Vučić's declaration that he would not meet any of the opposition's demands, even if 5 million people (i.e., almost

---

<sup>54</sup> *Evropska unija sanira klizište između Mokre Gore i Kremne*, July 28, 2017, <https://europa.rs/evropska-unija-sanira-kliziste-izmedju-mokre-gore-i-kremne/> [accessed March 10, 2023]; Pero Jovović, *GDE SU PARE? 2014. godine smo dobili MILIONE za prevenciju poplava, A SAD NAM SE DEŠAVA ISTI PAKAO! KAKO?*, June 9, 2019, <https://www.espreso.rs/vesti/drustvo/397167/gde-su-pare-2014-godine-smo-dobili-milione-za-prevenciju-poplava-a-sad-nam-se-desava-isti-pakao-kako-foto> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>55</sup> *Kome i zbog čega smeta Vučić, ako ga podržava skoro dve trećine građana Srbije? Političkim secikesama i lopovima svih rasa...*, November 10, 2018, <http://macvanski.info/kome-i-zbog-cega-smeta-vucic-ako-ga-podrzava-skoro-dve-trecine-gradjana-srbije-politickim-secikesama-i-lopovima-svih-rasa/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>56</sup> *EU Ambassador to Serbia Condemns Assault on Opposition Members, EU Officials Urged to React*, November 24, 2018, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2018/11/24/eu-ambassador-serbia-condemns-assault-opposition-members-eu-officials-urged-react/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

all of Serbia) took to the streets.<sup>57</sup> Since then, anti-government demonstrations have been using the “1 of 5 Million” (“1 od 5 miliona”) slogan, which quickly became the slogan of the opposition and alternative circles opposing Vučić’s autocratic politics. The protests culminated in March 2019 when demonstrators stormed the headquarters of the state-owned RTS television, demanding to be allowed to appear in front of its cameras and present their arguments.<sup>58</sup> It seemed as if the Serbs were strongly determined to repeat the scenario of the 2000 Bulldozer Revolution when Milošević was overthrown. However, this did not happen, and the energy of the demonstrators quickly burned out, with most of them deciding that there was no real chance of changing those in power.

The same is true today because the democratically oriented part of society has lost faith in the possibility of changing the situation. In May 2019 (so before the outbreak of the pandemic), Slobodna Evropa published the results of a survey conducted in the Balkan countries (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Bulgaria, and Romania) in 2018–2019, which showed that 75% of young Serbs dreamed of emigrating from the country, which was the highest rate in the region.<sup>59</sup> It can be assumed that since the overwhelming majority of Serbian youths dream of going abroad, they do not believe in the economic progress and a better future promised by the authorities. Experts alarm that the youngest and best-educated citizens are gradually moving from Serbia to other countries (mainly Germany) and that their decisions are motivated not only by higher wages but also by the disastrous organization of the state and its institutions.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, many Serbs like the populist slogans, especially since the incumbent president is able to read the dreams and expectations of ordinary people, both domestically and internationally. The problem is that the actions of his team are not aimed at real modernization of the country and improvement of the quality of life of citizens. Instead, they are calculated to help them remain in power and profit from it.

## Conclusions

As emphasized in the introduction, the example of Serbia discussed in this article has parallels among the countries of the region where autocratic politicians remain in

<sup>57</sup> *Vučić o protestu: Nek vas se skupi pet miliona, nijedan zahtev neću da ispunim*, December 9, 2018, <https://n1info.rs/vesti/a442570-vucic-o-protestu-u-beogradu/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>58</sup> *Policija izvela demonstrante iz RTS-a, MUP podneo krivične prijave*, March 16, 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/29825130.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].

<sup>59</sup> *Bez komentara: Vučića im preko glave, rekordnih 75% Srba želi da emigrira iz Srbije*, <https://www.vidiportal.ba/index.php/novosti/11558-vucica-im-preko-glave-rekordnih-75-srba-zeli-da-emigri-iz-srbije> [website unavailable].

<sup>60</sup> *Rajić: Eksperti neće zaustaviti iseljavanje mladih iz Srbije*, January 11, 2019, <https://www.danas.rs/ekonomija/rajic-eksperti-neece-zaustaviti-iseljavanje-mladih-iz-srbije/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

power, proving that only they can ensure stabilization. Characteristic of all Western Balkans societies is a negative perception of the political class, a deep conviction that it is guided only by its own interests and not by the needs of citizens. The problem is that widespread criticism does not translate into electoral defeat because people are willing to vote for those in power again for fear of destabilization and worsening of the already bad state of affairs. Such fears are not entirely unfounded since in many cases, such as in Serbia, the opposition is weak, divided, and lacks a concrete program.

## References

- Anastasijevic Dejan, *Hard Days Ahead for Serbia's Gay PM*, June 19, 2017, <https://euobserver.com/beyond-brussels/138265> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Arandarenko Mihail, Krstić Gorana, Žarković Rakić Jelena, *Analysing Income Inequality in Serbia. From Data to Policy*, Belgrade: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2017, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bu-eros/belgrad/14010.pdf> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Beograd će postati svetska metropola, tvrdi gradonačelnik Siniša Mali*, April 10, 2016, <https://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/beograd/2106671-beograd-ce-postati-svetska-metropola-tvr-di-gradonacelnik-sinisa-mali> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Beogradski metro i obećanja: „Prva linija od 2028. godine“ – koliko je puta do sada Beograd trebalo da dobije metro*, January 22, 2021, <https://www.danas.rs/bbc-news-serbian/beogradski-metro-i-obećanja-prva-linija-od-2028-godine-koliko-je-puta-do-sada-beograd-trebalo-da-dobije-metro/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Bez komentara: Vučića im preko glave, rekordnih 75% Srba želi da emigrira iz Srbije*, <https://www.vi-diportal.ba/index.php/novosti/11558-vucica-im-preko-glave-rekordnih-75-srba-zeli-da-emigrira-iz-srbije> [website unavailable].
- Bieber Florian, “The Rise (and Fall) of Balkan Stabilocracies,” *Horizons* 10 (2018), <https://www.cirsd.org/en/horizons/horizons-winter-2018-issue-no-10/the-rise-and-fall-of-balkan-stabilocracies> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Bieber Florian, *Uspon autoritarizma na Zapadnom Balkanu*, transl. Đorđe Tomić, Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2020.
- Čolović Ivan, *Bordel ratnika. Folklor, politika, rat*, Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2007.
- Čolović Ivan, *Dubina. Članci i intervjui 1991–2001*, Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2001.
- Delauney Guy, *Controversy Surrounds Belgrade Waterfront Development*, June 21, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-36576420> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Doček za Vučića u Pekingu uz gardu kineske vojske*, April 24, 2019, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/ci/story/1/politika/3500158/docek-za-vucica-u-pekingu-uz-gardu-kineske-vojske.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Džalto Davor, “Jugoslavija. Snovi i strvarnost,” in Noam Čomski, *Jugoslavija. Mir, rat i raspad*, Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2019.
- EU Ambassador to Serbia Condemns Assault on Opposition Members, EU Officials Urged to React*, November 24, 2018, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2018/11/24/eu-ambassador-serbia-condemns-assault-opposition-members-eu-officials-urged-react/> [accessed March 10, 2023].

- Evropska unija sanira klizište između Moke Gore i Kremne*, July 28, 2017, <https://europa.rs/evropska-unija-sanira-kliziste-izmedju-mokre-gore-i-kremne/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Glušćević Slađana, *Srbija ekonomski stagnira – Od standarda EU udaljena najmanje 50 godina*, August 5, 2018, <http://voice.org.rs/srbija-ekonomski-stagnira-od-standarda-eu-udaljena-najmanje-50-godina/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Građani sadili drveće na mestu posećenog u parku Ušće*, March 16, 2019, <https://novimagazin.rs/vesti/194390-gradjani-sadili-drvece-na-mestu-posecenog-u-parku-use> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Ignjatijević Marija, *The Collapse of the Rule of Law in Serbia: the “Savamala” Case*, May 17, 2016, <https://pointpulse.bezbednost.org/magazine/collapse-rule-law-serbia-savamala-case/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Izbori 2020: Raspisani izbori u Srbiji – ko može da glasa i za koga*, March 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-51733902> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Jaz između bogatih i siromašnih u Srbiji najveći u Evropi*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.021.rs/story/Info/Srbija/179810/Jaz-izmedju-bogatih-i-siromasnih-u-Srbiji-najveci-u-Evropi.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Jovović Pero, *GDE SU PARE? 2014. godine smo dobili MILIONE za prevenciju poplava, A SAD NAM SE DEŠAVA ISTI PAKAO! KAKO?*, June 9, 2019, <https://www.espreso.rs/vesti/drustvo/397167/gde-su-pare-2014-godine-smo-dobili-milione-za-prevenciju-poplava-a-sad-nam-se-desava-isti-pakao-kako-foto> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Karabeg Omer, *Zašto Vučić potcenjuje inteligenciju građana Srbije?*, March 19 2017, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/most-vucic-izbori-gradjani-inteligencija/28377656.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Kineske investicije i balkanske glavobolje*, April 11, 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kineske-investicije-i-doma%C4%87e-glavobolje/29874983.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Kome i zbog čega smeta Vučić, ako ga podržava skoro dve trećine građana Srbije? Političkim secikesima i lopovima svih rasa...*, November 10, 2018, <http://macvanski.info/kome-i-zbog-cega-smeta-vucic-ako-ga-podrzava-skoro-dve-trecine-gradjana-srbije-politickim-secikesama-i-lopovima-svih-rasa/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Konačni rezultati: SNS-u 44,99 odsto, lista oko Đilasa 18,93*, March 5, 2018, <https://rs.n1info.com/vesti/a369485-konacni-rezultati-beogradskih-izbora-2018/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Kriza u odnosima Hrvatske i Srbije je režirana farsa, ali postoji opasnost da se neka vatra i zapali*, April 29, 2018, <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/bivsi-srbijanski-ministar-vanjskih-poslova-jeremic-novu-krizu-izmedju-srbije-i-hrvatske-nazvao-reziranom-farsom---515445.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Lakićević Mijat, *Srbija i Kina: Koliko nas košta čelično prijateljstvo*, May 1, 2019, <https://pescanik.net/srbija-i-kina-koliko-nas-kosta-celicino-prijateljstvo/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Martinović Iva, *Zašto opada uverenje građana Srbije da je Kina najveći donator?*, April 15, 2021, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/zasto-opada-uverenje-gradjana-srbije-da-je-kina-najveci-donator/31205609.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Matyjanka Marek, *Belgrad na wodzie*, June 27, 2017, <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/belgrad-na-wodzie/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Mihm Andreas, „*Wir sind die Nummer eins in Europa*“, February 4, 2021, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/warum-serbien-so-gut-durch-die-corona-krise-gekommen-ist-17176274.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Nowakowski Krzysztof, „Klientelizm jako forma korupcji,” *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny* 1 (2007), 213–30.

- Pešić Vesna, *Divlje društvo. Kako smo stigli dovede*, Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2012.
- Petrović Tanja, *Srbija i njen jug. „Južnjački dijalekti” između jezika, kulture i politike*, Beograd: Fabrika knjiga, 2015.
- Piotrowski Piotr, *Agorafilia. Sztuka i demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Poznań: Rebis, 2010.
- Polak Karlo, *Glavnoj železničkoj stanici je mesto u centru grada*, February 5, 2018, <https://www.danas.rs/beograd/glavnoj-zeleznickoj-stanici-je-mesto-u-centru-grada/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Policija izvela demonstrante iz RTS-a, MUP podneo krivične prijave*, March 16, 2019, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/29825130.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Predsednik Vučić obišao radove na delu brze pruge Beograd – Budimpešta*, May 30, 2020, <https://www.predsednik.rs/lat/pres-centar/vesti/predsednik-vucic-obisao-radove-na-delu-brze-pruge-beograd-budimpesta> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Primatarova Antoinette, Deimel Johanna, *Bridge Over Troubled Waters? The Role of the Internationals in Albania*, Sofia: Centre for Liberal Strategies, 2012.
- Radio Slobodna Evropa, *Mit o najvećem ekonomskom rastu na Balkanu*, February 27, 2019, [https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=424422364766175&\\_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=424422364766175&_rdr) [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Radłowska Anna, “Klientelizm jako czynnik wpływający na wzrost rozwarstwienia ekonomicznego w państwach Afryki Subsaharyjskiej,” *Forum Politologiczne* 12 (2011), 491–515.
- Rajić: *Eksperti neće zaustaviti iseljavanje mladih iz Srbije*, January 11, 2019, <https://www.danas.rs/ekonomija/rajić-eksperti-neece-zaustaviti-iseljavanje-mladih-iz-srbije/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Rekšć Magdalena, *Wyobrażenia zbiorowe społeczeństw byłej Jugosławii w XXI wieku. Perspektywa politologiczna*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019.
- Slučaj Hercegovacka: Ko je odlučio da bude srušena*, May 24, 2016, <https://www.koreni.rs/slucaj-hercegovacka-ko-je-odlucio-da-bude-srusena/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Stopa rizika od siromastva u Srbiji viša nego u svim EU državama*, February 18, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200222085241/http://rs.n1info.com:80/Vesti/a461423/Siromastvo-zaposlenih-u-Srbiji.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Surk Barbara, “To Build Dubai of the Balkans, Serbia Deploys Bulldozers and Baseball Bats,” *The New York Times*, April 29, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/world/europe/serbia-belgrade-waterfront-uae-aleksandar-vucic.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Svi problemi zamišljenih trasa metroa u Beogradu*, February 13, 2020, <https://direktno.rs/beograd/252758/svi-problemi-zamisljenih-trasa-metroa-u-beogradu.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Telesković Anica, *Najveći rast u regionu*, June 22, 2018, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/406017/Najveci-rast-u-regionu> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Veljković Vladimir, *Stabilocracy and Political Crisis*, November 14, 2017, <https://pescanik.net/stabilocracy-and-political-crisis/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Vučić o gondoli: Biće to najlepša atrakcija Beograda, opozicija ne zna gde je Beogradska tvrđava*, May 3, 2019, [https://insajder.net/sr/sajt/vazno/14317/Vu%C4%8Di%C4%87-o-gondoli-Bi%C4%87e-to-najlep%C5%A1a-atrakcija-Beograda-opozicija-ne-zna-gde-je-Beogradskatvr%C4%91ava.htm?fbclid=IwAR2JUx\\_EaJILBUUoCXhAo4Eq4JPRKWwLOQ9Wi3R1c\\_2K-KRgI6m3-eC3cIo](https://insajder.net/sr/sajt/vazno/14317/Vu%C4%8Di%C4%87-o-gondoli-Bi%C4%87e-to-najlep%C5%A1a-atrakcija-Beograda-opozicija-ne-zna-gde-je-Beogradskatvr%C4%91ava.htm?fbclid=IwAR2JUx_EaJILBUUoCXhAo4Eq4JPRKWwLOQ9Wi3R1c_2K-KRgI6m3-eC3cIo) [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Vučić o protestu: Nek vas se skupi pet miliona, nijedan zahtev neću da ispunim*, December 9, 2018, <https://n1info.rs/vesti/a442570-vucic-o-protestu-u-beogradu/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Vučić otkrio šta mu je Putin šapnuo tokom parade u Moskvi*, May 5, 2018, <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vucic-otkrio-sta-mu-je-putin-sapnuo-tokom-parade-u-moskvi/1n9jr0f> [accessed March 10, 2023].



- Vučić: Srbija je na dobrom putu i napreduje*, <http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/9/politika/2531888/vucic-srbija-je-stabilna-napreduje-i-bezbednosno-je-stabilna.html> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Žarković Jelena, *Mapa podeljene Srbije*, April 1, 2019, <https://pescanik.net/mapa-podeljene-srbije/> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- Żukiewicz Przemysław, *Pozycja ustrojowa rządu w państwach postjugosłowiańskich. Analiza prawnoporównawcza*, Wrocław: Instytut Politologii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9zohYKzpZI> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5p-bjNUz1Y> [accessed September 25, 2021].
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKhXbM4uN9w> [accessed March 10, 2023].
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yjDZuVDHtY> [accessed March 10, 2023].

## To Whom Does Bosnia Belong?<sup>1</sup>

*Piotr Tafilowski*

University of Warsaw, Poland

e-mail: [p.tafilowski@uw.edu.pl](mailto:p.tafilowski@uw.edu.pl)

ORCID: 0000-0003-2798-3249

### Keywords

Bosnia, war, Dayton Agreement, national tensions

According to Slovenian ethnologist and anthropologist Božidar Jezernik, the Balkans are a strange land between East and West, Europe and Asia, civilization and barbarism. For Europeans during the 19th and 20th centuries, they were an exotic, almost oriental world. The newcomers from the West did not understand the Balkans, seeking the exotic and the unusual, and treated them contemptuously, with a sense of their own superiority. Those inhabitants of the region who adopted European fashions and customs were particularly despised. For a Balkan “savage” dressed in Western garb resembles “any thing but a gentleman,”<sup>2</sup> he becomes pathetic.

In Poland, interest in the Balkans, and especially in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, is not waning. New books on this region of our continent are published every year. The spectrum of published texts is very wide, ranging from academic studies on history and works by sociologists or political scientists, through reportage literature, to journalism and essays. Much attention is still paid to the wars that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s.

One of the independent states that emerged from these cruel and devastating wars is Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, there is no state in the world with a comparably complex legal and political structure (there are, inter alia, fourteen Councils of Ministers, Prime

---

<sup>1</sup> Review of the book: Andrzej Krawczyk, *Czyja jest Bośnia? Krótka historia kraju trzech narodów*, Kraków: Znak Horyzont, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers*, London: Saqui, 2004, 230.

Ministers, and Parliaments and three State Presidents). The functioning of this three-part entity, inhabited by three feuding peoples and administered by national bodies under the authority of the UN, is extremely difficult (or, to put it bluntly, inefficient), and its equilibrium is very shaky. This very country is the subject of a study by Andrzej Krawczyk, a historian and diplomat, who served as the Polish ambassador to Bosnia for five years. The author himself describes his book as historical journalism and does not claim it to be a scholarly work.

The book consists of fifteen chapters of varying length and degree of detail. The first part (up to p. 183) is devoted to the history of Bosnia from medieval times, through the period of Ottoman rule and its modern history, until the break-up of Yugoslavia. The historical outline is necessarily very simplified and cursory. The author devotes five pages to medieval Bosnia and eight pages to the Ottoman rule (compared to 42 pages on the siege of Sarajevo in 1992–1996). The period after Bosnia's incorporation into the Austro-Hungarian Empire (from 1878 onward), which was a time of huge institutional change, is discussed more extensively. Among other things, Krawczyk focuses on the fundamental transformation of the social structure, for example, the replacement of Muslims, who had hitherto constituted Bosnia's clerical elite, by people of the Catholic faith.

The history of this country was complicated from its very beginning. National tensions between Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats were already apparent there under Austrian rule. Benjamin Kállay, the Austrian Minister of Finance, who was entrusted with the administration of Bosnia (1882), tried to ease them. He sought to introduce an efficient administration so as to eliminate the need for any local organizations, associations, or political parties. This concept is sometimes referred to as "administrative absolutism." Kállay intended to make Bosnia a homogeneous state without internal national and religious divisions. However, this attempt failed. National and religious tensions proved stronger than any administrative attempt to "glue together" a state whose inhabitants felt no connection to each other. Sources of conflict were never in short supply there, and successive "administrators" of Bosnia departed from Kállay's concept.

It is worth noting the fact, little-known in Poland, that at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, about 1,200 Polish peasant families (especially from the districts of Nisko and Tarnobrzeg) settled in north-western Bosnia (Banja Luka-Prijedor region). This is the origin of the Polish saying "opowiadać banialuki" ("to tell balderdash"), which is used to this day.

Another chapter in Bosnian history opened in 1918 with the birth of the South Slav state of Yugoslavia. The creation of the federated state, however, did not resolve the nationality problems that continued to divide the communities, this time the Muslim and Serb ones in particular. The new state in the inter-war period was a very unstable structure torn apart by internal conflicts.

Much space (pp. 95–156) is taken up by a description of Bosnia's position within the Yugoslav state structure during World War II and in the following decades. What is outlined here, however, is the history of the whole country under Josip Broz-Tito

rather than the part of Yugoslavia that interests us. Bosnia and Herzegovina as such basically disappears from view for several decades, and the Muslims living there enter the author's field of vision only occasionally.

The main focus of the author's interest, however, is the emergence of the independent Bosnian state in the 1990s and its problems in modern times. After the break-up of Yugoslavia (1990–1991, described on pp. 157–183), Bosnia and Herzegovina began to function as an independent state (since 1992). The remainder of the book, which constitutes more than half of its volume, is devoted to this period, and the narrative here becomes very detailed. The first 180 pages of the book are basically just an introduction to this essential part.

Although Bosnia succeeded in gaining independence, it was at the same time torn apart by ethnic conflicts that lasted for years and, in practice, have not died out to the present day. This small, regionally backward, and divided country has suffered a lot in gaining independence. After the murderous siege of Sarajevo, the second issue extensively covered in this book is the genocide in Srebrenica, described in an objective, balanced way, without emotional involvement. Depending on the attitude of the reader, this can be a great advantage or an unforgivable disadvantage of Krawczyk's work.

The author of this essay, which borders on historiography, is mainly interested in political history and some economic history, in addition to military, political, and institutional questions of recent times. He devotes much attention to religious issues (e.g., changes in church organization after Bosnia passed from Ottoman rule to that of the Catholic Austrian monarchy) and national-religious conflicts, which are the daily bread of the Bosnian population. Journalism as a craft, as well as the work of journalists and the role of the media in covering the siege of Sarajevo and the war in Bosnia, are reflected upon in greater depth. The establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the trials before it are described in more detail.

In fact, the main question posed by this book is not so much "to whom does Bosnia belong?" ("Czyja jest Bośnia?") but rather: are three nationalities and three religions capable of building a common state there? Bosnia and Herzegovina as we know it today was created by the Dayton Agreement in 1995. As is often emphasized, this conference ended the war but failed to produce peace. There is still no end in sight to the crises plaguing Bosnia: political, economic, demographic, and so on. The country is still teetering on the brink of disintegration, and, unfortunately, its future does not look optimistic.

Andrzej Krawczyk's systematic narrative allows the reader to put the facts about the war in Bosnia in order (the text is supplemented by a "Calendar of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992–1995"). It is a compendium that systematizes our unstructured knowledge on the subject, which we all possess to some extent due to media coverage.

Thanks to its essayistic form and the author's unprejudiced detachment, the book reads easily, even though it deals with difficult topics. It makes one reflect on the helplessness and passivity of governments, international organizations, and public opinion in the face of war crimes, as well as on the negligence and procedural absurdities

of bringing criminals to justice. It is a story about the still unhealed wounds of ethnic cleansing that do not allow the three peoples of Bosnia to build a common future.

### References

- Jezernik Božidar, *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers*, London: Saqui, 2004.  
Krawczyk Andrzej, *Czyja jest Bośnia? Krótka historia kraju trzech narodów*, Kraków: Znak Horyzont, 2021.

## INFORMACJE DLA AUTORÓW

Uprzejmie prosimy wszystkich Autorów przysyłających po raz pierwszy swoje teksty o dokładne podanie imion, nazwisk, tytułów naukowych, miejsc afiliacji, adresów prywatnych i numerów telefonów.

Teksty należy dostarczyć drogą mailową na adres: [przegladhumanistyczny@uw.edu.pl](mailto:przegladhumanistyczny@uw.edu.pl)

W celu zapobieżenia zjawiskom tzw. ghostwriting i guest authorship, w przypadku artykułów napisanych przez więcej niż jednego autora, prosimy o staranne wymienienie wszystkich współautorów oraz ich afiliacji.

Prosimy o dołączenie do tekstu artykułu bibliografii załącznikowej (według poniższego wzoru zapisu), krótkiego (do 700 znaków) streszczenia w języku polskim lub angielskim oraz oświadczenia, że tekst nie był publikowany ani nie został skierowany do druku w innym czasopiśmie lub tomie zbiorowym.

Bibliografia załącznikowa:

Książka autorska

Kowalski Jan, *Tytuł*, wyd. 2, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar 1999.

Autor z redaktorem

Benardete Seth, *Encounters & Reflections. Conversations with Seth Benardete*, red. Ronna Burger, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2002.

Zbiorówka (z redaktorem)

*Ancients and Moderns: Essays on the Tradition of Political Philosophy in Honor of Leo Strauss*, red. Joseph Cropsey, New York: Basic Books 1964.

Tłumaczenie polskie

Bloom Allan, *Umysł zamknięty. O tym, jak amerykańskie szkolnictwo wyższe zawiodło demokrację i zubożyło dusze dzisiejszych studentów*, przeł. Tomasz Bieroń, Poznań: Wydawnictwo „Zysk i S-ka” 1997.

Artykuł (rozdział itp.) w książce

Davidson Paul, *Keynes and Money*, w: *Keynes, Money and Monetarism*, red. Roger Hill, London: Macmillan 1989, s. xx–xx.

Artykuł w czasopiśmie

Dannhauser Werner J., *Na powrót stać się naiwnym*, przeł. Paweł Marczewski, „Przegląd Polityczny” 2007, nr 84, s. 138–143.

Internet

Butterworth Charles, *Leo Strauss in His Own Write: A Scholar First and Foremost*, [http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/Theory/Transcript\\_Butterworth.pdf](http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/Theory/Transcript_Butterworth.pdf) [dostęp dd.mm.rrrr].

Prosimy o przestrzeganie następujących zasad przy przygotowywaniu tekstu:

- Objętość artykułu nie powinna przekraczać 17 stron (30 000 znaków ze spacjami), recenzji – 6 stron (10 000 znaków ze spacjami).

- Tytuły książek, rozdziałów i artykułów oraz zwroty obcojęzyczne należy wyodrębnić kursywą.
- Tytuły czasopism oraz cytaty należy umieścić w cudzysłowie.
- Przypis bibliograficzny powinien w sposób jednoznaczny odsyłać do przywoływanego źródła.
- Przypis bibliograficzny powinien zawierać: imię i nazwisko autora, tytuł (kursywą), miejsce wydania, wydawnictwo, rok wydania, stronę. W przypadku artykułów z czasopism: imię i nazwisko autora, tytuł (kursywą), nazwa czasopisma (w cudzysłowie), rok wydania, numer, strona. Opis bibliograficzny publikacji internetowej: imię i nazwisko autora, tytuł (kursywą), protokół dostępu (miejsce, ścieżka, nazwa), data dostępu w formacie [dostęp 15.05.2015]. Przy pracach tłumaczonych po tytule skrót przeł., imię i nazwisko tłumacza. Cytując to samo źródło, które było przywołane w poprzednim przypisie, piszemy: Ibidem, s. Cytując utwór tego samego autora, co utwór przywołany w poprzednim przypisie, zamiast imienia i nazwiska piszemy: Idem. Cytując źródło, którego pełen opis bibliograficzny znalazł się w którymś z wcześniejszych przypisów, po imieniu i nazwisku podajemy tylko skróconą wersję tytułu. Prosimy nie stosować przypisów w systemie oxfordzkim. Wzory zapisów na stronie <http://www.przeglądhumanistyczny.pl/> w zakładce Informacje dla autorów.

Każdy tekst nadesłany do redakcji jest recenzowany przez redaktora tematycznego. Artykuły wstępnie zakwalifikowane przez redakcję do druku są następnie poddawane recenzji zewnętrznej.

W związku z procesem recenzyjnym przewidywany czas na decyzję o publikacji wynosi co najmniej 4 miesiące.

Autor opublikowanego tekstu otrzymuje jego wersję elektroniczną oraz egzemplarz autorski pisma.

Redakcja nie zwraca tekstów niezamawianych.

Ceny „Przeglądu Humanistycznego” w roku 2022:  
prenumerata roczna (4 numery) – 120,00 zł,  
prenumerata półroczna (2 numery) – 60,00 zł,  
pojedynczy numer – 30,00 zł.

Wydanie papierowe z 10% rabatem oraz wersję elektroniczną czasopisma można kupić w księgarni internetowej Wydawnictw Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego  
[www.wuw.pl](http://www.wuw.pl)

Prenumeratę „Przeglądu Humanistycznego” prowadzą:

RUCH S.A., [www.prenumerata.ruch.com.pl](http://www.prenumerata.ruch.com.pl), e-mail: [prenumerata@ruch.com.pl](mailto:prenumerata@ruch.com.pl),  
tel. 22 693 70 00 lub 801 800 803,  
KOLPORTER SA, [www.dp.kolporter.com.pl/prenumerata](http://www.dp.kolporter.com.pl/prenumerata),  
GARMOND PRESS SA, [www.garmondpress.pl/prenumerata](http://www.garmondpress.pl/prenumerata)

Subscription orders for all journals published in Poland available through the local press distributors or directly through the Foreign Trade Enterprise:

ARS POLONA SA, ul. Obrońców 25, 03-933 Warszawa, Poland,  
[www.arspolona.com.pl](http://www.arspolona.com.pl), tel. 48 22 509 86 00,  
ABE-IPS Sp. z o.o., ul. Grzybowska 37A, 00-855 Warszawa, Poland, [www.abe.pl](http://www.abe.pl),  
e-mail: [info@abe.pl](mailto:info@abe.pl), tel. 48 22 654 06 75.

Cena 30 zł (w tym 8% VAT)