

**Denis Ljuljanović**

Research Assistant at the History of Eastern Europe,

Justus-Liebig University, Gießen, Germany

E-mail: [denisljuljanovic@gmail.com](mailto:denisljuljanovic@gmail.com); [denis.ljuljanovic@geschichte.uni-giessen.de](mailto:denis.ljuljanovic@geschichte.uni-giessen.de)

- **Paper presented at the 2021 ASN World Convention, 5-8 May 2021**
- **Do No Cite Without the Permission of the Author**

**Seeking a Homeland, Serving the Empire: Mohammedan Migrants from Montenegro  
and their Integration within the Ottoman Bureaucracy (1870-1914)**

Denis Ljuljanović

**Abstract:** The present article examines the migration of the Muslims of Montenegro to the Ottoman Empire as forced displacements and/or coerced movements. These movements were the outcome of discourses of exclusion and exclusionary practices toward the “other.” During the Great Eastern Crisis (1875-1878), this policy took the form of discursive violence and the physical expulsion of Montenegro’s Muslim populations. By contrast, the Ottoman Empire welcomed these migrants (*muhacirler*) and integrated them as agents of frontier defense on the Ottoman periphery, or as the Sultan’s personal guard units in Istanbul, the imperial center. As a result of these policies, large numbers of these Muslims accepted their position in the Ottoman Empire, and became active players within the Ottoman bureaucracy. I will argue that migrants were a geographically and socially mobile group that played important roles in the Ottoman administration and its ideological and cultural activities, and eventually shaped the nature of Ottoman rule. Because the new formulation of Ottoman provinces after the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878) made Islam a more culturally prominent element, these itinerant people took advantage of this change to influence Ottoman rule at both its peripheries and center.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire, Montenegro, Refugees, Forced Migration, Ottoman Bureaucracy, Integration

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between forced migrations, military conflicts, and nationalism represents an emotional, conflictual, and terminological puzzle. The extant scholarship that examines this triangular relationship is divided into two main strands. One strand, which is rooted in refugee studies, focuses on the conflict rather than the ideological reasons behind population transfer and forced migration.<sup>1</sup> Most of the research belonging to this area of study suggests that military and security reasons were the main impetus behind forced migrations, while studies on nationalism and nation-building focus on the nationalist ideologies of states, and describe population transfer as part of ethnic cleansing policy.<sup>2</sup> This article approaches both research strands as being interconnected and relevant to forced migrations and displacements, and will therefore try to connect them. In this light, the article's aim is to contribute to refugee studies and the history of migration within an Ottoman context. It focuses on the conflict during the Great Eastern Crisis (1875-1878) and the displacement of Montenegro's Muslim population to different Ottoman provinces and Istanbul, in addition to their role in the Ottoman bureaucracy. These Muslims are often called Mohammedans in the documents, and in the Ottoman literature they are known as *muhacir* (refugee/migrant/expellee/the departed),<sup>3</sup> a term that does not exactly correspond to the English translation of "migrant" or "refugee." While the terms refugee (*mülteci*) and migrant (*göçmen*) are used quite widely in contemporary Turkish, the word *muhacir* belongs more to Ottoman (religious) terminology, and is derived from the prophet

---

<sup>1</sup> Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long, and Nando Sigona, *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Pertti Aho, *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and Its Aftermath* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> According to Ella Frantatuono "the term *muhacir* gained resonance as a social category as the Ottoman state developed settlement and aid strategies to administer the large immigrant population." See Ella Frantatuono, "Producing Ottomans: Internal Colonization and Social Engineering in Ottoman Immigrant Settlement," *Journal of Genocide Research* 21 (2019): 9.

Mohammed's migration from Mecca to Medina, known as *Hijra* (*Hicret* in Turkish).<sup>4</sup> In the nineteenth century, it was often (but not exclusively) related to expellees from the Balkans (*Balkan kökenli*) or Rumeli (*Rumelili*).<sup>5</sup> Since the term *muhacir* does not precisely correlate with contemporary English usage, I will often refer to these persons as *muhacirler*/refugees/migrants/itinerant Ottomans. I also argue that the lives of these *muhacirler* provide a dynamic set of filters for exploring world histories, and challenge previous uses of Ottoman history that neglected the roles of migrants as a subordinate category within meta-nationalistic narrative(s).<sup>6</sup> Many of these itinerant Ottomans were not isolated subjects, but belonged to multicultural and multilingual environments of diverse peripheries operating in the larger region (from the Balkans to the Middle East), and helped to shape the imperial center as well. As such, these migrants were incorporated into the body of public officials (*memurlar*), playing important roles in the development of Ottoman institutions, and serving as active players within the Young Turk movement.<sup>7</sup> These itinerant Ottomans were thus integrated within Ottoman "governmentality," which some scholars today refer to as a kind of "Ottoman colonial modernity."<sup>8</sup> This article uses a post-colonial theoretical approach and center-periphery relations to answer the following questions: what factors (war, ideology, territorial sovereignty, economy) brought about these displacements? What happened to the lives of the refugees after military conflicts? How did these "children of the Borderlands"<sup>9</sup> and the peripheries define the imperial center? What was the imperial center's policy - toward migrants from Montenegro, and what role did these migrants play in establishing links with the imagined homeland?

To answer these questions, I will trace several examples of refugee activities across the empire's full geographic reach, ranging from the Balkans to Eastern Anatolia and the Middle East. This trans-regional scope will help to make the argument that *muhacirler* played a more significant

---

<sup>4</sup> See <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/muhacir--osmanli> (accessed on June 24, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Esra Bulut, "'Friends, Balkans, Statesment Lend Us Your Ears': The Trans-state and State in Links between Turkey and the Balkans," in *Transnationalism in the Balkans*, eds. Denisa Kostovicova and Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic (New York: Routledge, 2008), 96.

<sup>6</sup> Isa Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees, 1878-1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World* (London: Bloomsbury Academy, 2013), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims: 1821-1922* (Pennington, NJ: Darwin Press Inc, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Ella Fratantuono examines immigrant settlement policies as "Ottoman internal colonization and social engineering." See: Frantatuono, *Producing Ottomans.*; Furthermore, Isa Blumi defines this Ottoman colonial attempt as an "initial gesture of Ottoman spiritual colonialism" that are actually "drawn from within Ottoman refugee communities" helping to shape Ottoman institutions. Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees*. p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Young Turks - Children of the Borderlands?", *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (2003): 275-286.

role in the making of the larger modern world than is generally accepted in the extant scholarship.

## 1. ORIENTALIST PERCEPTION(S) AND STATE-BUILDING IN MONTENEGRO: WAR AND FORCED MIGRATIONS

In his “Diary” (1876), the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky observed that “in connection with the Eastern question, some small beast (*piccola bestia*) has run into Europe which does not give to all good, peace-loving people a chance to calm down-people who love mankind and wish to see it flourishing.”<sup>10</sup> In his opinion, this *piccola bestia* did not belong to “civilized” Europe, therefore “it does seem that with the final solution of the Eastern question, all other political strife in Europe will be terminated.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, thinking about what Dostoevsky called a “final solution” was a common feature at the turn of the century, one that culminated with imperialism. This process of finalizing the *Question d’Orient* was promoted not only by Russia and Austria-Hungary, but by South Slavic populations in Rumelia as well. It was in the immediate aftermath of the Berlin Treaty (1878) that the Ottoman Balkans experienced perhaps the most intense period of violence and mass migration. This scheme of a “final solution” was accepted among the Balkan autonomous regions (i.e. Montenegro and Serbia), thereby intensifying “ethnic” and “sectarian” conflict, which was supported by Russian Pan-Slavism.

Historically, the region of Zeta on the Adriatic Sea, which was later known as Montenegro (*Karadağ*), became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1496. Due to its geographic position and tribal social structure, this region was only nominally incorporated within the Ottoman administrative system subordinated to the *pashas* appointed by the Ottoman Imperial Council in Scutari (İşkodra/Shkodra/Skadar). Montenegro was actually a semi-independent principality under the Ottomans, and was initially represented by a bishop-prince (*vladika*). For most of Montenegrin history, *vladikas* conserved Montenegrin tradition, and maintained good relations with Imperial Russia via the Orthodox Church. Tsars often supported Montenegrin tribes in their efforts to strength their semi-independent status, as well as in anti-Ottoman movements.<sup>12</sup> Actually, during most of the nineteenth century, with the help of the traditional protector state of Russia, Montenegrin rulers and intelligentsia constructed national narratives of

---

<sup>10</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *A Writer’s Diary* (Evanston, III.: Northwestern University Press, 1993-1994), 428.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>12</sup> Armando Pitassio, “The Building of Nations in South-Eastern Europe, the Cases of Slovenia and Montenegro: A Comparative Approach”, in *The Balkans: National Identities in a Historical Perspective* eds. Stefano Bianchini and Marco Dogo (Ravenna: Longo, 1998), 53.

Montenegrins as the “chosen people,”<sup>13</sup> who should build a nation-state and carry out this final solution against “undeveloped barbaric Ottomans.” The invented traditions of the Montenegrins as a “chosen people” entrusted with the specific mission to “save the true faith and Serbdom,” and to fight against the “Turkified Slavs” and “big Asiatic Mongols (Ottomans),”<sup>14</sup> were supported by Montenegrin newspapers in the 1870s. Furthermore, the *Montenegrin Voice* (*Glas Crnogorca*) newspaper remarked that Montenegrins “have the mission (*zadaću*) of being the interpreter of all Serbdom and the messenger (*vjestnik*) of their sorrow to the world, from those free high mountains of Montenegro (*sa slobodnijeh visina crnogorskih*).”<sup>15</sup> This small group of people must work for the liberation and unity of millions of Christians, who for many centuries had been in a state of shameful slavery (*u ropstvu najsrमतnijem*) under the Mohammedan yoke (*u jarmu muhamedanstva*), the butchers of the faith of Christ (*zakletog krvinka vjere hristove*).<sup>16</sup> This concern for Christian “liberation” from the Muslim yoke emanated from the nationalistic meta-narratives that assumed conflict was inevitable among different ethnically constituted religions. Moreover, Montenegrin authorities found legitimacy for this liberation and state-building in the Orientalism discourses popular throughout nineteenth century Europe—considered to be the “center of civilization.” In this regard, the more outside patrons insisted on using these discourses, the more local nationalist promoters insisted on exploiting various “barbarian” identities. The Montenegrin newspaper accordingly presented “the people of the East as being incapable of leading an independent life-style” (*istočni narodi nisu sposobni za samostalni život*), adding that “they do not know about the right of liberty” (*pravo na slobodu*). Because they are “incapable for civilization” (*nesposobni za civilizaciju*) and “incapable of leading an independent life-style” (*nesposobni za samostalni život*) someone “should bring civilization to them” (*nositi civilizaciju*).<sup>17</sup> Those who possess “progress” (*napredak*) are not just Montenegro and Serbia, but also other Christian populations of the Ottoman Empire that are “active, productive and smart” (*radni, proizvodni i umni*). Consequently, the condition for true progress was the complete liberation of the people from the Ottoman yoke (*potpuna narodna sloboda*).<sup>18</sup> In this light, the Great Eastern Crisis paved the way for the ascendancy of Pan-Slavism and promotion of the Montenegrin nation-state, led

---

<sup>13</sup> According to Anthony D. Smith the notion of a “chosen people” can be applied only with the sanctification of national narratives as sacred communion. Furthermore, he points out that religious notions of the “sacred” and “profane” are integrated into the national culture that represents their nation as “chosen” and their policy as “sacred”. See Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Petar Petrović Njegoš, *Lažni car Šćepan Mali* [Fake Tsar Sćepan Mali] (Trieste: 1851).

<sup>15</sup> *Glas Crnogorca*, April 21, 1873.

<sup>16</sup> *Glas Crnogorca*, April 21, 1873.

<sup>17</sup> *Glas Crnogorca*, April 21, 1873.

<sup>18</sup> *Glas Crnogorca*, April 21, 1873.

by “Prince Nikola and brave Montenegrins” (*junačke Crnogorce*)<sup>19</sup> against the local Muslim population, who were largely seen as Turks. Since these local Mohammedans were not included in the Montenegrin national myth, instead being perceived as a “barbaric” and “oriental other,” many Muslim families were expelled during this process of nation- and state-building in Montenegro.

## 2. OTTOMAN POLICY AND MIGRANTS AS POLITICAL INSTRUMENTS

During the Great Eastern Crisis (1875-1878), Montenegro was involved in several battles against the Ottoman Empire, known as the Great War (*Velji rat*) in Montenegrin historiography.<sup>20</sup> After this crisis and the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878), Montenegro became an independent state in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin. Between 1875 and the 1880s many Mohammedans migrated to the Ottoman Empire in response to nationalist pressures, while others sought to maintain their religion and traditions within Montenegro, and some even switched sides when it suited their personal interests. At this early stage of the crisis, the large flow of refugees from Montenegro overwhelmed the Ottoman bureaucracy, which was unable to properly care for these itinerant Ottomans. Kirby Green, the British Consul at Scutari, wrote to the British Foreign Secretary Marquis of Salisbury that refugees wanted to return to their homes in order to continue their previous life in Montenegro; however, these *muhacirler* “have been ordered away by Montenegrins” and “the Turkish authorities also discourage their repatriation.” The *muhacirler* hoped that “England will not permit the XXXth<sup>21</sup> article of the

---

<sup>19</sup> *Glas Crnogorca*, January 15, 1877.

<sup>20</sup> See Živko M Andrijašević, Šerbo Rastoder, *Istorija Crne Gore: od najstarijih vremena do 2003* [History of Montenegro: From Ancient Times to 2003] (Podgorica: Centar za iseljenike Crne Gore, 2006); Živko M. Andrijašević, *Crnogorska crkva, 1852-1918* [Montenegrin Church. 1852-1918] (Nikšić: Filozofski fakultet, 2008); Šerbo Rastoder, “Istorijsko-metodološki okvir istraživanja novije istorije crkve (vjerskih zajednica) u Crnoj Gori (1878-1945)” (The Requirements on Historical and Methodological Frameworks of Contemporary Church History in Montenegro 1878-1945), *Istorijska nauka i nastava istorije u savremenim uslovima* [History as a Science and Continuity of History in the Present], CANU 14 (1994): 199-242.

<sup>21</sup> According to the report by Kirby Green, refugees from Montenegro were willing to live their lives as before, combining their Turkish and Montenegrin hybrid identities in religious and other cultural areas. They also had the option of living in the Ottoman Empire and keeping connections with their land, retaining their business and estates. Article XXX of the Treaty of Berlin guaranteed them these possibilities: “Muslims or other subjects who own a property in the territories annexed by Montenegro, have a possibility to residence outside the Principality and to retain their estates” (*les Musulmans ou autres qui possèdent des propriétés dans les territoires annexés au Monténégro et qui voudraient fixer leur résidence hors de la Principauté pourront conserver leurs immeubles*). See *Deutsches Reichsgesetzblatt Band 1878*, Nr. 31, Seite 307 – 345. However, as explained later in the report,

Treaty (of Berlin) to be disregarded until too late.”<sup>22</sup> The Ottoman government encouraged these migrants to stay, and welcomed them “as male inhabitants” who could be enlisted in “a regular force for frontier defense.”<sup>23</sup> As a result, large numbers of male migrants accepted their position in the Ottoman administration, joining the Ottoman bureaucracy and often playing an active role. These examples were not included in the Montenegrin and Turkish historiographies, and especially did not point out their regional and local identities, seeing them instead as marginalized, and hence bereft of agency. Contrary to that, my argument is that these *muhacirler* were part of dynamic constituencies across a wide range of settings, and were consequently influential subjects of the Ottoman Empire. In short, they were far from being the victims they have often been presented as.<sup>24</sup> In this respect, the new Hamidian regime (1876-1908) ensured that the entrenched Ottoman bureaucratic order provided assistance for the refugees, as well as opportunities for active participation in the bureaucracy.<sup>25</sup> The Ottoman state established a Refugee Commission (*Muhacir Komisyonu*) for this purpose, which became part of the Ministry for Police (*Zaptiye Nezareti*) in 1875, as part of the latter’s reorganization during the Great Eastern Crisis into a General Refugee Commission (*Idare-i Umumiye-i Muhacir Komisyonu*) in response to the new migration towards the Ottoman Empire.<sup>26</sup> These commissions developed into one of the key bureaucratic agencies of the modernizing Ottoman Empire, arranging long-distance resettlement and aid to refugees in the form of land grants, agricultural subsidies, and tax exemptions.<sup>27</sup>

The policy of helping refugees and including them within the bureaucratic apparatus can also be analyzed in the broader context of the Ottoman counter-colonialist response to European imperialism.<sup>28</sup> This Ottoman colonial modernity was a “survival tactic” for ensuring the stability and protection of the state that entailed an important quest for legitimacy or in Weber’s

---

article XXX of the Treaty was not respected by Montenegrins or by Ottoman authorities, as they were occupied with the division, homogenization policies, and identity formation.

<sup>22</sup> Bilal N. Simsir, *Rumeliden Türk Göçleri* [Migrations of Turks from Rumelia] (Ankara: Türk tarih kurumu basimevi, 1989), 632, Scutari, October 9, 1878, in Foreign Office Archives (Public Record Office – London), F.O. 424/75 – Confidential (3799), pp. 146-147, No. 232

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, see the document from the British Consul at Scutar (Işkodra vilayeti/Ottoman Empire) Mr. Kirby Green to Salisbury, Scutari, October 26, 1878, p. 641

<sup>24</sup> Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees*.

<sup>25</sup> Maurus Reinkowski, “The State’s Security and the Subjects’ Prosperity: Notions of Order in Ottoman Bureaucratic Correspondence (19th century),” in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 208.

<sup>26</sup> Nedim İpek, *Rumeliden Anadoluya Türk Göçleri* [Migrations of Turks from Rumelia to Anatolia] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996), 43-106.

<sup>27</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arsivi or BOA., Y.EE. No. 101/54, Hicri, 4 Zilhicce 1297, (7 November 1880)

<sup>28</sup> Isa Blumi, “Ottomanism Then and Now: Historical and Contemporary Meanings,” *Die Welt des Islams* 56 (2016): 290-317.

words, “the state’s monopoly on the use of force” (*Gewaltmonopol des Staates*).<sup>29</sup> In order to ensure stability and protection, the Ottoman government recruited many of the arriving refugees to promote devices of Ottoman legitimacy such as coats of arms, Friday prayer, the caliphate, and education—the necessities of civilization and prosperity.<sup>30</sup> These Mohammedans from Montenegro would play a role in the larger regional context, and would also be among the most enthusiastic supporters of the Ottoman government.

## 2.1. THE UNITY OF ISLAM AND PANISLAMISM IN OTTOMAN RUMELIA

At a time when millions of Europeans were migrating to America, the Muslims from the Balkans were invited to settle down in “house of peace” (*dar al-salam*). In the early 1880s, the Ottoman Empire offered and encouraged “unequivocal ideological support to the immigration of Muslims from the lost Ottoman territories.”<sup>31</sup> In 1887, Seyh-ul-Islam issued a religious degree (*fetva*) encouraging migration, directly “calling for Muslims from these (lost) areas to emigrate and settle within the Ottoman state.”<sup>32</sup>

A High Commission on Islamic Immigration was set up to monitor Muslim migration under the direct supervision of the Sultan as the Caliph of all Muslims. This commission, in cooperation with local *imams* outside the Ottoman Empire, gave many sermons in mosques, and determined the conditions under which a Muslim should live. Since many Muslims were living now under Austro-Hungarian, Serbian or Montenegrin rule, some *imams* encouraged mass-migration from the land of disbelief (*dar al-kufr*) to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>33</sup> A supporter of this idea was Hilmi Taşlıcalı from Pljevlja (modern-day in Montenegro, back then part of Ottoman empire), who wrote a “Treatise on the Hijra and Muhajirin” (*Risala fi al-hijrawa al-muhajirin*) in 1885 (1303).<sup>34</sup> He lived for some time in Istanbul and Medina, where he wrote

---

<sup>29</sup> Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” published as “Politik als Beruf,” *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, (Munich: 1921), pp. 396-450.

<sup>30</sup> Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003): 311-342.

<sup>31</sup> Amir Karić, *Myth of Bosniak Pan-Islamism*, (Sarajevo: Center for Advanced Studies, 2015), 75-76; Kemal H. Karpat, “Hidžret iz Rusije i sa Balkana: proces samodefiniranja u kasnoj osmanlijskoj državi” (The Hijra from Russia and the Balkans: The Process of Self-Determination in the Late Ottoman State), in *Muslimani Balkana, istočno pitanje u XX stoljeću* [The Muslims of the Balkans: The Eastern Question in the 20th Century], ed. Fikret Karčić (Tuzla: 2001) 68.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



this book, in which he reminded the Muslims of the Balkans, the majority of whom lived in Christian states (such as Montenegro), that migration is an obligation for all people living under infidel rule.<sup>35</sup> This Pan-Islamic call was compatible with Ottoman vision and policy, and was diffused with the help of bureaucrats and Islamic scholars. As a result, religious authorities and bureaucrats used documents to heavily emphasize the Sultan's position as the Caliph of all Muslims, thereby pledging their loyalty to him. A refugee from Montenegro named Hafiz Salih Gašević—who was born in Nikšić (1850), where he finished elementary religious school and Ottoman junior high school was one of the bureaucrats in charge of promoting religious consciousness through a language understood by the people living in the periphery. He then continued his education in Istanbul, and was later appointed as a district governor (*kaymakam*) in Luma and Šahović (modern-day Tomaševo in Montenegro), where he wrote and translated a poem about the Prophet Mohammed in the Bosnian language entitled “*Mevlud alani ali lisan-i Bosnevi* (1296/1879).”<sup>36</sup> The *Mevlud* had an ideological message. It brought its subjects living on the periphery closer to the new counter-colonial ideology known as unity of Islam (*Ittihad-i Islam*). In the prologue to the *Mevlud*, Gašević mentions that he is a migrant, and sees himself as “*muhacir* from the homeland (*vatan*) of Nikšić” (*muhadžir sam, vatan mi je bio Nikšić/ Ime mi je hafiz Salih Gašević*) who wants to promote “Islam as the right path” (*pravi put*).<sup>37</sup> As a local notable who was expelled (*muhacir*), he praised Caliph Abdul Hamid Khan for accepting so many migrants, as well as the Sultan's contribution to spreading the message of the Prophet Mohammed in the local (Bosnian) language.<sup>38</sup> Many local Muslims did not speak Arabic or Turkish, but according to Hafiz Gašević, the inhabitants had “a great desire to know the actual message of the *Mevlud*” (*Mi smo žudni znati Mevlud šta kaže*).<sup>39</sup> By the time of the Hamidian regime, these *muhacirler* at the imperial ideological margins were propped up by the Ottoman government to influence certain religious practices and ensure the loyalty of the Muslims toward the Sultan *cum* Caliph. In this respect, another prominent *muhacir* from the town of Ulcinj (Ülgün in Turkish, Ulqini in Albanian) bears mentioning: Hafiz Ali Ulqinaku (born 1853), who completed an Albanian translation of the “*Mevlud Sherif*” (1879) that was published

---

<sup>35</sup> Fikret Karcic *Šerijatsko pravo – reformizam i izazovi modernosti* [Islamic Law: Reformism and Challenges of Modernity] (Sarajevo: Biblioteka, knjiga 6, 2009), 134-135; Ekrem Gülşen, “Hilmi b. Hüseyin Bosnevî'nin (Arapça-Türkçe) Hicret Risâlesi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme” (Hilmi Husain Bosnevi and the Analysis of the Hicret Risalesi) in *PESA (International Journal of Social Studies)* 4 (2018): 30-45.

<sup>36</sup> Salih Gašević, *Mevlud alani ali lisan-i Bosnevi* [Mevlud in Bosnian Language] (Skopje: Kosovo Vilayeti Maatbasi, 1296/1879); Prior to 1879, all Mevluds were performed exclusively in Turkish (Suleyman Çelebi) or Arabic (Berzanji or Sufi Busiri).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

in Istanbul.<sup>40</sup> The translation of the *Mevlud* into the Albanian language was meant to prevent nationalistic tendencies and separatist movements as was the case with the *Mevlud*'s translation into Bosnian, but it also sought to bind Ottoman Rumelia to religious notions of Unity of Islam (*İttihad-ı İslam*).<sup>41</sup> Abdulhamid II's support of "Albanianism"<sup>42</sup> was thus an attempt to bound Albanian (and Bosnian) speaking Muslims to Pan-Islamism instead of an independent national movement.<sup>43</sup> The main supporter of such ideas was Mehmed E. Safvet Pasha, a former Grand Vizier who on 12 April 1880 submitted a memorandum advocating a separate policy for people living in the periphery, especially Albanian-speaking groups who offered "essential of support" (*maya-ul-istinadi*) to the Ottoman bureaucracy in combatting its enemies.<sup>44</sup> Such engagements were favoured by the Hamidian regime to oppose Pan-Slavism and Hellenism in the Balkans, as well as European imperialism globally, with a "unified politico-religious entity vis-à-vis the colonial West with its ties to Christendom."<sup>45</sup> These refugees operating at the fringes of the Ottoman world for the "unity of Islam" transformed and shaped the institutionalization of religion over the next three decades. They were not just occupied with translating the *Mevlud*, but also held important positions as religious scholars or bureaucrats in the Ottoman administration in Rumelia. They gained political importance by expanding Ottoman authority in areas that remained on its edges or even outside of empire, and by connecting the local population and refugees to "religious brotherhood." Another such refugee was Hadži Mustafa Suknić, who was born in Podgorica (1853) and moved with his family to Shkodra during the Great Eastern Crisis (1878) to find a safe haven where he could work in the local mosque as an imam. Another prominent *muhacir* was Mula Medo Kokić from Podgorica, who also became an imam in Shkodra, in the Rus district inhabited by refugees from Montenegro. Podgoričeli Yusuf Ziyaeddin effendi Uruçi also decided to leave his hometown Podgorica, but two years

---

<sup>40</sup> Ali Ulqinaku was a teacher in the elementary school of the Duda (Shkodra) and appointed in 1889 as Mufti of Lezha. See Rezart Beka, "The life and work of Hafiz Ali Ulqinaku," in *The Albanian Mawlid of Hafiz Ali Ulqinaku (r.a.)* (Cambridge: Muslim Academic Trust, 1436 Hicri/2014), 4.

<sup>41</sup> Celal Nuri İleri, *İttihad-ı İslam ve Almanya* [Unity of Islam and Germany] (Istanbul: Yeni Osmanlı Matbaa ve Kütüphanesi, 1333/1914).

<sup>42</sup> Nathalie Clayer, "The Albanian Students of the Mektebi-i Mülkiye: Social Networks and Trends of Thought," in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Nuray Bozbora, "The Policy of Abdulhamid II regarding the Prizren League," *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies* 11 (2006): 47. Sultan Abdulhamid II tried to give an Islamic character to the organized resistance of Albanian notables in the Prizren League (1878) in order to oppose preparations for the Congress of Berlin and eventual consequences of the Treaty.

<sup>44</sup> George Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913* (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006), 73.

<sup>45</sup> Kamal Soleimani, *Modern Islamic Political Thought, "Islamism" and Nationalism*, See: [https://www.academia.edu/31595719/Modern\\_Islamic\\_Political\\_Thought\\_Islamism\\_and\\_Nationalism](https://www.academia.edu/31595719/Modern_Islamic_Political_Thought_Islamism_and_Nationalism) (Accessed 30.03.2019).

later in 1880.<sup>46</sup> He settled then in Shkodra, where he was a famous professor (*müderriş*) and known as former deputy of the first Ottoman Parliament.<sup>47</sup> Some of these migrants worked near the Ottoman-Montenegrin border zone in Tuzi, and kept contacts with families and communities across the border in Montenegro. Among them were Murat Vodopić and Halil Efendi, who were also part of the Ottoman bureaucracy.<sup>48</sup> The younger generation of refugees included Vodopić, who was appointed as the main religious authority (*müftü*) in Tuzi in 1910,<sup>49</sup> and Halil, who occupied an important position as the district governor of Tuzi immediately after the Great Eastern Crisis in 1880.<sup>50</sup> In other parts of “Turkey in Europe,” in Chania (Crete), major (*binbaşı*) Mehmet Krnić from Podgorica was appointed as a guard of Berovich Pasha – the governor of Crete who also originated from Montenegro.<sup>51</sup>

Known today in the local Albanian context as the *muhaxhoret nga Mali i Zi* (Montenegro migrants) who were settled in the city or hinterlands of Scutari vilayet, they constituted a powerful sub-group in helping to bring both religious unity and security to borderland areas. Their engagements aimed to preserve Sultan Abdulhamid’s four pillars of the state (*dört rüknu devlet*), by being active subjects in the empire’s western border (the pillar of support in Ottoman Rumelia).<sup>52</sup> This sub-group of migrants recognized the Hamidian regime as their protector, if for no other reason than that it had provided opportunities for their long-term survival. In return, they were expected to reestablish and preserve stability in the Ottoman peripheries, or to be incorporated in the Sultan’s private guard. As a result, many refugees from Montenegro’s occupied regions of Krajina (*Kraja*), or from the cities of Ulcinj and Podgorica, took important positions in the Sultan’s Yıldız Palace, as will be discussed below.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Muhamet Pirraku, *Veprimtaria e Myderriz Jusuf Podgorices be Rrjedhen e Levizjes Kombetare* [The Activities of Professor Jusuf Podgorica and His Role in National Movement], *Revistja Paqja* [Magazine Peace], Nr. 2, 19, January, 2007

<sup>47</sup> Hakki Tarik, *Meclis-i Meb’usan 1293=1877* [Ottoman Parliament 1877], (Istanbul: Gazete-Matbaa Kütüphane, 1954)

<sup>48</sup> Skender Rizaj, *Çeshtja e muhaxhireve (1875-1881)* (The Question of Immigrants 1875-1881), in *Shperngulja e shqiptareve gjate shekujve* [Emigrations of Albanians during Centuries], (Prishtina: Seksioni per Hulumtime Shkencore, 1992), 155.

<sup>49</sup> Ajdin Rakić, *Crnogorski student u Carigradu* [Montenegrin Students in Istanbul], <http://montenegrina.net/fokus/ajdin-rakic-crnogorski-studenti-u-carigradu/> (Accessed 30.03.2019).

<sup>50</sup> See: BOA, Y.A.RES. 9/28, M. 28 Muharrem 1298/H. 31 December 1880 and BOA, Y..A...RES. 11/61; DH.MKT. 1338/22

<sup>51</sup> DACG, MID, binder 114

<sup>52</sup> George Gawrych, *The Crescent*, 55.

<sup>53</sup> This study focuses on Slavic speaking and Albanian migrants/*muhacirler* from the region of Krajina (*Kraja*); those from Ulcinj (*Ulqin*) and parts of Podgorica were not given detailed consideration. However, according to the Austro-Hungarian diplomat Theodor Ippen, over 60 people from this region worked as personal guards to Sultan Abdulhamid II. Some of them worked as a gunmen (*tüfekci*), or gendarmes (*hadim jandarma*) or as commandants in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, such as Tahir Pasha from *Kraja* (part of *Işkodra vilayeti*), Tahir Pasha from Podgorica (also part of *Işkodra vilayeti*), Halil Bey Skeja, and Osman Pasha, the general of brigades and commandant of guardian battalions (*zuaveve shqiptare*). See Clayer, *Ne fillimet e nacionalizmit*

## 2.2. OTTOMAN POLITICS AND MIGRANT ACTIVISM IN THE OTTOMAN CAPITAL

Apart from migrants who were settled in the vast areas of the empire's peripheries, some other groups of *muhacirler* made the fortunes in the empire's expanding cities, such as Thessaloniki and Istanbul. In the big cities there were many itinerant Ottomans who conducted political, commercial, and military activism. Often these *muhacirler* asked the empire for institutional assistance and help. As a consequence, these groups did not operate in self-isolating cells, but rather became active subjects, constantly negotiating with the central government and reorganizing their initiatives. The constant efforts by government officials to address the needs of these refugees allowed them to play important roles in the Ottoman court as gunmen (*tüfekçi*) or gendarmes (*hadım jandarma*), or as the personal guard for Sultan Abdulhamid II (Halil Bey Skeja, Tahir Paşa from Kraja, Osman Paşa etc.).<sup>54</sup> The First secretary (*Mabeyn-i Hümayun Başkâtibi*) of the Ottoman Empire between 1894 and 1908, Tahsin Pasha, wrote that "Abdulhamid II's guards on the first line were Albanians" (*Padişahin muhafazası olarak Arnavutlar birinci safı işgal ederlerdi*).<sup>55</sup> Albanians enjoyed a special status in the Sultan's palace (*Sultan Hamidin Arnavutlara karşı bu itimadi onun için bir siyastin temelini teşkil ediyordu*) because they were an Ottoman fortress in Rumelia (*Rumelide Arnavutlar, Abdülhamid siyasetinin kalesi gibi görülürdü*).<sup>56</sup> According to the Ottoman First secretary, "Bosniaks also enjoyed a special status" (*Arnavutlardan sonra Sarayda Boşnakların özel bir yeri vardı*).<sup>57</sup> At the turn of the century, it was usual practice in Ottoman palaces to find Albanian- and Bosnian-speaking *muhacirler* from Montenegro. One such prominent itinerant Ottoman bureaucrat was Tahir Pasha from Kraja, the son of Mehmet Dragaj, who became an active mobile player in the Ottoman capital (i.e. Yıldız palace). After the League of Prizren (1878) and the Treaty of Berlin, he was appointed as a bureaucrat in the Ottoman periphery<sup>58</sup> and intervened several times in local politics in the Ottoman Balkans.<sup>59</sup> He first became

---

*shqiptar – Lindja e nje kombi me shumice mysliman ne Evrope* [Aux Origines du Nationalisme Albanais: La Naissance d'une Nation Majoritairement Musulmane en Europe] (Tirana: Marlin Barleti, 2012), 62-63; Theodor Ippen, *Skutari und die Nordalbanische Kuestenebene* (Sarajevo: Daniel A. Kajan, 1907), 41-42.

<sup>54</sup> Ippen, *Skutari*, 41-42.

<sup>55</sup> Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid'in Sirdaşı* [A Confident Person of Sultan Abdulhamid] (Istanbul: Yakin Plan Yayinlari, 2000), 33.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>58</sup> Newspaper *Serveti Fünun*, No. 483; See Vali Kabashi, "Kujtimet e Stambollit" dhe shqipëtarët e Beshiktashit ["Istanbul Memoirs" and Albanians at Beshiktash], *Koha Ditore* (Kosovë), 11.04.2020.

<sup>59</sup> BOA, BEO 30/2224, Hicri, 02. Z, 1309; Tahir Pasha played an active role on the Ottoman-Montenegrin border near Berane and Kolašin, as well as in Ishkodra Vilayeti (Scutari).

governor of Shkodra until 1896 (replaced by Has Edip), and later captain of the palace guard or *tüfekçi* (*albanische Trabantengarde*).<sup>60</sup> Ibrahim Temo, one of the founders of the Committee of Ottoman Union, a forerunner organization of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and the Young Turk movement, was simply stating the fact that Tahir Pasha played a very important role in the Abdulhamid II's policy in the Ottoman Balkans and Yıldız palace (*saray silahşorlarından İşkodrali Tahir bey*).<sup>61</sup> Further, Eqrem Bey Vlora described him in his memoirs (written in German), stating that he (Vlora) personally “enjoyed conversation with old Marshall Tahir Pasha from Krajina, who became a captain of the palace.”<sup>62</sup> Vlora also described an incident from 31 March 1909, when Sultan Abdulhamid II was obliged to resign the throne, and an old Marshall Tahir Pasha said (to Abdulhamid) in the name of all Albanian soldiers: “you have fed us for thirty years, thus do not let us be embarrassed by not allowing us to protect you on this day!”<sup>63</sup> Tahir Pasha's message of unmitigated loyalty to Sultan Abdulhamid II ultimately cost him his life. Being so firmly linked to the Sultan, Tahir Pasha was equally threatened by the Young Turk revolt of 1908 and 1909. While others in the region celebrated the demise of the Hamidian regime, for many, including *Krayinalilar*, the events of April 1909 threatened their political security. Together with other guardians from Kraja (modern-day Montenegro), Halil Shahin Sjeja and Zef Maci Shestani were removed to Dodecanese islands (*On İki Ada*).

Other prominent personalities among these *muhacirler* were Hasan Izzet Efendi and his son Damat Ferid Pasha (1853-1923) who after a Montenegrin-Ottoman conflict landed in Istanbul from Potoci (Montenegro). Both played noteworthy roles in the Ottoman bureaucracy and used opportunities to rise in prominence. First, Izzet Efendi was a member of the Ottoman Council of State (*Şûrâ-yı Devlet*) and worked in the Ottoman administration in Beirut and Sidon vilayets.<sup>64</sup> His son Ferid attended the school in Ottoman Lebanon and later married Sultan Abdulmecid I's daughter (Mediha Sultan). This was why he was known as *Damat* of the Ottoman family, which means “bridegroom.” By the turn of the century, he used his social

---

<sup>60</sup> Fatos Baxhaku, Karl Kaser, *Die Stammesgesellschaften Nordalbaniens: Berichte und Forschungen*, 144; see Bericht 37, Ippen an Goluchovski, Scutari, 7. September 1901 or HHStA, Politisches Archiv XXXVIII, 419, (Scutari 1901), 376-379.

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Ibrahim Temo, Ahmet Riza, *Biz Ittihatçılar* [We – the Unionist] (Istanbul: Örgün Yayinevi, 2009), 90-94.

<sup>62</sup> Quote: “mit dem alten Marschall Tahir Pasha, einem fruheren Parkwächter aus Kranje, der Komandant der Palastgarde geworden war, unterhielt ich mich prachtig. Wenn ich bei ihnen war, erlebte ich die Verhältnisse vergangener Jahrhunderte des osmanischen Reiches, in denen solche treue und ergebene Paladine der Dummheit die Geschicke eines Weltreiches nach Belieben lenken und verrenken konnten.” See Eqrem Bey Vlora, *Lebenserinnerungen I* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Auflage: 1, 1973) 81.

<sup>63</sup> Quote: “Der alte Marschall Tahir Pasha sagte im Namen aller albanische Soldaten: ‘Du hast uns dreissig Jahre hindurch für diesen Tag genährt, tue uns nicht die Schande an, jetzt unser Antlitz zu schwärzen, indem du uns untersagst, dich zu verteidigen!’“ Ibid., 202.

<sup>64</sup> BOA, A) MKT. 135/41, Hicri, 17. B 1264

networks and human resources to actively engage in Ottoman diplomacy (in Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg and London),<sup>65</sup> and became a powerful politician in the Ottoman capital. After the Young Turk Revolution (1908), he was one of the founders of the liberal Freedom and Accord Party (*Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası*) and became a member of the Ottoman Parliament. Damat Ferid Pasha also held the Office of Grand Vizier during two periods under the reign of the last Ottoman Sultan Mehmed VI.<sup>66</sup>

During the First World War he strongly opposed the CUP policy and its persecution of non-Muslims (i.e. Armenians/*Ermeniler* and Greeks/*Rumlar*).<sup>67</sup> Infused with liberal idealism and favoring more regional autonomy for diverse communities, he became one of the initiators of the war crime trials against the CUP members who were in power when these atrocities were committed against the Armenian population. However, due to his involvement in the Treaty of Sevres (1920), which marked the partition of the Ottoman Empire among the Allied powers, he remained widely disliked, and was seen as a traitor in modern Turkey (*vatana ihaneti sabit olan*).<sup>68</sup>

### 2.3. OTTOMAN BUREAUCRATS IN OTTOMAN PERIPHERIES

There are also groups of trans-imperial migrants who took important positions in other parts of Ottoman peripheries, far from Ottoman Rumelia and Istanbul. Such personalities included Tahir Pasha Bilbez/Bibezić,<sup>69</sup> who was the governor of Van, Bitlis, and Mosul, in addition to his son Cevdet Bey, and nephews Mustafa Nuri and Haydar Hilmi Vaner.

Tahir Pasha was born into a family from Podgorica, the son of Hacı Ali Efendi Bibezić (in Turkish known as Bilbez).<sup>70</sup> He started his career in 1868 in his hometown Podgorica as a prominent Ottoman official in the Chamber of the City (*Podgoriçe Kazası Tahrirat odası*) and become secretary of the Podgorica Land Registry (*Podgoriçe Tapu Kitabeti*) in 1872.<sup>71</sup> After the major changes occurring in the Ottoman Empire, such as the Great Eastern Crisis and Montenegro's independence in 1878, he was expelled from Podgorica to Shkodra Province.

---

<sup>65</sup> BOA, BEO. 3782/283586, Hicri, 13. B 1328

<sup>66</sup> Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası: II Meşrutiyet Devrinde İttihat ve Terakki'ye Karşı Çıkanlar* [Freedom and Accord Party: Second Constitution and Politics against the Committee of Union and Progress], (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.; He was also twice a Grand Vizier (sadriazam) during 1919 and 1920. See İsmail Hâmi Danişmend, *Osmanlı Devlet Erkânı*, [The Ottoman State] (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Fahrettin Altay, *On Yıl Savaş ve Sonrası* [Ten Years War and Afterwards] (Ankara: Eylem Yayınları, 2008), 8.

<sup>70</sup> BOA, DH. SAİDd., 3/138, H. 29.12.1265

<sup>71</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 1173/41, Hicri 01. Ca. 1325

However, as a bureaucrat who already had experience with Ottoman administration in Podgorica, he was immediately appointed chief secretary of Scutari vilayet (*İşkodra Vilayeti Mektupçuluğu*). In 1880, following his temporary service as chief secretary in Thessaloniki (*Selânik Mektûbçuluğu*), he was transferred to several locations in Bitlis, Mosul, and Van (1898-1906), briefly in Trabzon (1907) and then again in Bitlis (1907-1908), Erzurum (1908-10), and Mosul (1910-1912).<sup>72</sup> Tahir Pasha was a key frontier actor (*serhad memurları*), and became a significant policy implementer, usually for the Palace. He was often asked to mediate and investigate local disputes. His personal experience of governance, which spanned thirty-three years in the eastern provinces, was no doubt central to his reputation as someone capable of restoring public order and calming social unrest. Tahir Pasha was committed to the bureaucratic spirit, and was thus appointed as a commission chairman for the Ottoman-Iranian Border Commission (1905-1908).<sup>73</sup> This dispute escalated in 1905, when Iran supported some tribal chiefs in the frontier zone who willingly interfered in the affairs of the pro-Ottoman tribes living in Urumiah. Tahir Pasha was ordered to resolve this conflict on the border (*hudud-u Iraniye tahkikine memur olan heyet-i resmiyye Erzurum valisi devletlü Tahir Pasha hazretleri*).<sup>74</sup> In a pamphlet, he criticized the Ottoman centralization efforts toward Kurdish tribes as a failure that opened up space for Iranian interference in the region.<sup>75</sup> In 1908, when the Young Turk Revolution broke out, the new government established by the Community of Union and Progress (CUP) suggested that they found it unnecessary to alert Ottoman troops regarding the status quo line with Iran, due to the critical financial situation. Although this issue remained unresolved for several years, this example shows an ascendant local who emerged from the Ottoman-Montenegrin borderland and became a mobile subject at the Ottoman-Iranian border, thereby illustrating the agency of migrants who shaped Ottoman policy. Scholars have often failed to consider the mobility of trans-regional biographies within the Ottoman Empire and its lost territories, although multiple examples connect vastly different (post)Ottoman regions and communities.

Another good example for this trans-regional mobilization was Tahir Pasha's first son, Cevdet Bey, who emerged in the confused post-Berlin regime (after 1878) adapting to the new conditions of the time. Importantly, he distrusted the Hamidian regime, joined the CUP, and

---

<sup>72</sup> BOA, DH. MKT. 1168/15, Hicri 09. R. 1325

<sup>73</sup> Ugur, Bozkurt, "II. Abdülhamid'in Valilerinden İşkodralı Tahir Paşa'nın (1848-1913) Hayatı ve Devlet Adamlığı," (Tahir Pasha - One of Abdulhamid's Governors 1848-1913) *Igd Univ Jour Social Science* 18 (2019): 237-254.

<sup>74</sup> Erzurum Maatbasi, 1329, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Sabri Ates, *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 233.

participated in the Young Turk movement. As such, he became governor (*mutasarrif*) of Jerusalem (1911-1912)<sup>76</sup> and district governor (*kaymakam*) of Nevrokop (today Gotse Delchev in Bulgaria). In these positions as governor, he witnessed ethnic tension and conflict from Jerusalem to the Balkans. After the Balkan wars (1912-1913), fear grew among CUP members that they might lose Arab provinces as well as Ottoman Anatolia, hence the violence beginning in 1914 exerted by the Ottoman government against its subjects in six vilayets (*vilayet-i sitte*) known as Ottoman Armenia.<sup>77</sup> During this disordered period, Cevdet Bey served as the governor of Van, having succeeded Hasan Tahsin Üzer in 1914.<sup>78</sup> His experiences in Jerusalem and the bloody Balkan wars turned him away from a logic of cooperation with heterogeneous groups, and transformed the Ottoman space into a zone of violence in the Great War. The last decade of the Ottoman Empire was a period in which practices of negotiation with locals were forgotten, and nuances were no longer tolerated.<sup>79</sup> During this period of political turmoil, the Ottoman administrative goal became the extradition of people, even though they had a strong Ottoman link in the past. Cevdet Bey and his brother-in-law Enver Pasha (Minister of War since 4 January 1914 and *de facto* Commander in Chief)<sup>80</sup> bear responsibility for the massacres of the Armenians (1915) through the Deportation Law (*Sevk ve İskân Kanunu*) issued on May 27, 1915. The Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) played a key role in the massacres against non-Muslim population, which was directed by Eşref Kuşçubaşı's group that included a migrant from Montenegro named Ömer.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the political links between the Bibezić family and the central government, Tahir Pasha's nephews (Mustafa Nuri and Haydar Hilmi Vaner) also emerged as extensions of vast family networks in the general administrative development of empire. They both started working with their well-connected uncle, notably on projects that explicitly tied the Ottoman peripheries to the central government and global world. Mustafa Nuri worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Hariciye Nezareti*) as an important intermediary between Ottoman institutions and exploitative projects of foreign capital. Accordingly, the aforementioned

---

<sup>76</sup> Among the local Arab population in Jerusalem, he was known as "*mutasarrif al-Quds al-Sharif*," while in the French and English-language literature he was referred to as "governor of Palestine" (Djevdet Bey, Gouverneur de Palestine). See Johann Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem (1872-1908)*, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 57.

<sup>77</sup> Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem, Maurus Reinkowski, *World War I and the End of the Ottomans: from the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2015).

<sup>78</sup> Hasan Tahsin Üzer, *Makedonya Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi* [Macedonian Bandit History and the last Ottoman Period of Governance] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1979).

<sup>79</sup> Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem, Maurus Reinkowski, *World War I*.

<sup>80</sup> Enver Paşa, *Enver Paşa'nın anıları* [Enver Pasha's Diary](Istanbul: Türk İş Bankası, 2016).

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin C. Fortna, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 27.



*muhacirler* used their opportunities and capacities to penetrate into the heart of the Ottoman bureaucracy and establish connections with the larger world. As demonstrated, the regions of Montenegro provided the Ottoman bureaucracy with dozens of such examples, including “liberal” reformers such as Cevdet Bey, Mustafa Nuri and Haydar Hilmi Vaner. The rise of the CUP gave new impetus to these “liberals,” who advocated state centralization modeled on European states, and promoted a break-up of the “conservative elite.” According to the Austro-Hungarian consul in Mitrovica, one such personality was Vaner, who was “acting as a Young Turk or as an Albanian.”<sup>82</sup> He was born in Podgorica in 1875 (*1290 sene-i hicrisinde, sene-i maliye 1289 Podgorica Kasabasinda tevelliüd ettigi*)<sup>83</sup> and joined the Ottoman administration in the Van vilayet (1889) at a very young age. His positions as district-governor of Mitrovica and Köprulu in Ottoman Macedonia provided him with several possibilities to promote liberal ideas within the Young Turk movement.<sup>84</sup> Together with CUP members Müsir Kazim Pasha and Hacı Adil Bey (Minister of the Interior/*Dahiliye Naziri*), he joined Sultan Reshid on his tour of Rumelia between June 5-26 1911. During the Sultan’s visits to several cities (Thessaloniki, Skopje, Prizren, Prishtina, Bitola), he served as the primary translator from Ottoman Turkish into Albanian.<sup>85</sup> Vaner was also known to have maintained contacts with members of his family in Scutari vilayet, thanks to which he calmed the revolts in the Malësia region in 1911.<sup>86</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The historiographies of regional states (i.e. in Greece, Serbia or Montenegro) often represented the Ottoman period in the Balkans as a “Turkish yoke” and reduced it to “Turkish” barbarism, emphasizing the fundamental difference between Europe and the Orient. In this regard, local Mohammedans were resolutely portrayed as a Turkified (*poturice*) “other” belonging to the Orient, and should therefore abandon the European “Montenegrin land” (*gruda zemlje*). This Montenegrin nationalist promotion in the media took the form of discursive violence and the physical expulsion of the Muslim population during the Great Eastern Crisis (1875-1878). As has been discussed, the Montenegrin state applied several exclusionary practices toward

---

<sup>82</sup> HHStA, PA XIV/15, Liasse XI/6, Mitrovica, Zambaur, 20/02/1909; Nathalie Clayer, *The Albanian Students*, 306.

<sup>83</sup> BOA. DH. SAID. 92/359.

<sup>84</sup> BOA. DH.MUI. 3-2/36, lef.4. 22/08/1909.

<sup>85</sup> This was the first time a Sultan had officially visited any Ottoman region. See BOA. DH. MTV. 25/32, 31/05/1912.; Tafil Boletini, *Prane Isa Boletinit* [With Isa Boletini], (Tetove: Ndermarrja Gazetare, 1996), 73.

<sup>86</sup> BOA. DH. SAID. 180/173, 06/04/1911.

Muslims during this period, and often called upon the Montenegrin army “to expel Turks” (*bjež'te Turci*).<sup>87</sup>

The Ottoman Empire generally welcomed Balkan migrants to form a regularly embodied force for frontier defense in the Balkans and other parts of the empire.<sup>88</sup> There was a bureaucratic imperative to evenly distribute these *muhacirler* across the different areas of the empire, and to bound them up in a “brotherly union.” In the words of the Ottoman intellectual Şemseddin Sami Frasheri, this meant “being a subject of the Ottoman State (*Devlet-i Osmaniye'ye tab'iyet*).”<sup>89</sup> As a result of this Ottoman political agenda, large numbers of expellees accepted to call themselves Ottomans, in the sense of belonging to the Ottoman Empire and being its subject. Furthermore, these measures catalyzed their position in the Ottoman bureaucracy, and the active role they sought to play within it. Their multilayered interactions created numerous channels of opportunity. They were consequently far from being victims, as has often been stated, but active agents who became members of parliament, Grand Viziers (*sadriazam*), bureaucrats, guardians and established intellectuals who were incorporated within the Ottoman administration, and penetrated the empire’s periphery and reinforced its center. The primary lesson to be drawn from these stories is that Ottoman bureaucracy and imperial policy influenced its periphery, but was also impacted by local agents (i.e. migrants), who shaped the core values of both the Ottoman peripheries and Istanbul.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Bilal N. Şimşir, *Rumeliden Türk Göçleri*, [Migrations of Turks from Rumelia] Türk tarih kurumu basımevi, Ankara, 1989
- Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem, Maurus Reinkowski, *World War I and the End of the Ottomans: from the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide*, I.B.Tauris, 2016
- Eqrem Bey Vlora, *Lebenserinnerungen I*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg; Auflage: 1, 1973, pp. 81
- Tahsin Pasa, *Sultan Abdulhaminin Siradasi*, [A Confident Person of Sultan Abdulhamid] Yakin Plan Yayinlari, Istanbul, 2000
- George Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913*, New York, I.B.Tauris, 2006
- Theodor Ippen, *Skutari und die Nordalbanische Kuestenebene*, Daniel A. Kajon, Sarajevo, 1907

---

<sup>87</sup> *Glas Crnogorca*, January 15, 1877.

<sup>88</sup> Bilal N. Şimşir, *Rumeliden Türk Göçleri*, 641.

<sup>89</sup> Alexander Vezenkov, “Reconciliation of the Spirits and Fusion of the Interests. ‘Ottomanism’ as an Identity Politics”, in Diana Mishkova, *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 52.

- Nathalie Clayer, *Ne fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar – Lindja e nje kombi me shumice mysliman ne Evrope*, [Aux Origines du Nationalisme Albanais: La Naissance d'une Nation Majoritirement Musulmane en Europe] Marlin Barleti, Tirane, 2012
- Amir Karic, *Myth of Bosniak Pan-Islamism*, Center for Advanced Studies, Sarajevo, 2015
- Živko M Andrijašević; Šerbo Rastoder, *Istorija Crne Gore: od najstarijih vremena do 2003*, [History of Montenegro: From Ancient Times to 2003] Podgorica : Centar za iseljenike Crne Gore, 2006
- Selim Deringil, *The Life in a State of Nomadism and Savagery: The Late Ottoman Empire and Post-Colonial Debate*, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Apr., 2003)
- Nuray Bozboru, *The policy of Abdulhamid II regarding the Prizren League*, Turkish Review of Balkan Studies 11, 2006
- Rezart Beka, *The life and work of Hafiz Ali Ulqinaku*, in *The Albanian Mawlid of Hafiz Ali Ulqinaku* (r.a.), Muslim Academic Trust, 1436
- Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities (1800-1912)*, Palgrave Macmillian, 2011
- Isa Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees, 1878-1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World*, Bloomsbury Academy, 2013