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OTTOMAN TURKISH MANUSCRIPTS ABOUT MONTENEGRO IN THE REIGN OF SULTAN ABDÜLHAMID II

ABSTRACT: There are certain papers about Montenegro composed in the process of the Berlin Treaty of 1878 and afterwards. These papers, connected with the political, military, state and foreign policy of the Ottoman State, were first written during the reign of the Sultan Abdülhamid II and also continued to be produced in the times that followed. This paper deals with works of Münif Pasha, Kâmil Kapudân, Mehmed Subhi, Ahmed Teyfik (translation from Serbian), Ahmed Sedad and Ismail Fazıl (Cebesoy) Pasha.

These works, published in late 19th and early 20th century, were probably composed with the didactic purpose of providing information for the political and military milieu of the time and thus, they all give considerably significant information and knowledge about the history of Montenegro, its geography, administration, army, people, lifestyle and culture.

KEY WORDS: *Otoman Turkish Manuscripts, Montenegro, Sultan Abdülhamid II, Münif Pasha, Kâmil Kapudân, Mehmed Subhi, Ahmed, Ahmed Sedad, Ismail Fazıl (Cebesoy) Pasha.*

There are certain works on Montenegro composed in the process of the Berlin Treat of 1878 and afterwards. These works linked with the political, military state and foreign policy of the Ottoman State began to be written in the reign of the Sultan Abdülhamid II and also continued in the later periods.

Münif Pasha filed a brief including very important remarks and suggestions concerning the affairs of the state to Şirvanizade Mehmed Rüşdü Pasha -Grand Vizier at the time- during his ambassadorship in Tehran - the capital of Iran. Considering his ambassadorship to Tehran and grand-vizie-

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rate of Rüşdü Pasha, this brief must have been filed between 1873 and 1874. In other words, it was before the reign of Abdülhamid II, which covers the years from 1876 to 1909. These proposals suggested by Münif Pasha were, however, implemented during his reign¹.

Some of the views and suggestions made by Münif Pasha concerning Montenegro in this brief were as follows:

More caution is needed in dealing with autonomous vilayets i.e. Eastern Rumelia and particularly Wallacia and Transylvania, Serbia and Montenegro which might cause great difficulties and risks to the Ottomans. Sublime Porte will [should] gain knowledge of their status and work to acquire to advocate whatever is necessary for the aims and best interest of the Ottoman State. Although aforementioned provinces have kapu kethudası (official representatives) of the provincial governors, attractive journals, and secret officers in Istanbul, it is remarkable that the Sublime Porte does not even have information about their official newspapers' contents.”²

Since Serbia and Montenegro had the potential to cause great distress for the Ottoman government, it was advised to compile information about their status in the region, and act accordingly to the best interest and objectives of the state.

It is highly probable that Münif Pasha's brief was greatly influential in the studies done and works composed on Montenegro. As a matter of fact, the foreign policy and the state policy of the time supported the publication of such publications. For Sultan Abdülhamid believed that it was the incorrect policies carried out up to that time that led to the Berlin Congress and the Treaty of 1878. The State did not have an efficient foreign policy. The new forming balances in Europe were not observed closely, and thus, Ottoman foreign affairs could not be pursued with a profound, coherent and knowledgeable policy³. Consequently, a type of information center was established in the palace in order to track the political developments in the world more closely. Everything written about the Ottoman Empire, and the reports prepared by the representative offices abroad were convened and evaluated⁴.

The first work which we will deal with is entitled “*Some information about Montenegro*”⁵ –it has been printed in the early years of Abdülhamid II's reign. Its author Kâmil Kapudân born in Tobhâne, was one of the naval

¹ İbrahim Şirin, *Münif Paşa'nın Tahran'dan Gönderdiği Devlet İşleriyle İlgili Layihası ve Düşündürdükleri*, Turkish Studies International Periodical For the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic, Volume 3/4 Summer 2008, 760–762.

² İbrahim Şirin, *ibid.*, 769.

³ Cevdet Küçük, *Abdülhamid II*, DİA, c. 1, İstanbul 1988, s. 218

⁴ *Ibid.* 219

⁵ Original title is *Karadağ Hakkında Ba'zı Mâ'lumatı Şâmilidir*. (Tobhâneli Kâmil Kapudân, *Karadağ Hakkında Ba'zı Mâ'lumatı Şâmilidir*, Mühürân Matba'ası, 1294.)

officers; the ‘chief’ or ‘Agha’ of the Left Branch. His surname “Kapudan” means Grand admiral of the Ottoman fleet. This book composed of 49 pages was printed by the grace of the Ministry of Education in 1877 (Hegira 1294) in Istanbul.

In this work, Kâmil Kapudan gives information about Montenegro’s political history, its culture, daily life and relations between women and men, legal issues as crimes and punishments, and about warfare (topics such as technique and tactics). The information and descriptions about the socio-cultural life and dispositions of the Montenegrins are very interesting. At times, his narration includes certain stories based on true life experiences and observations. He underlines the closeness between Russia and Montenegro, and the aid and military assistance given to Montenegro by the Russians on every occasion. The last chapter is devoted to the Ottoman relations with other states before the treaty of Berlin in 1878.

Another work on Montenegro is *Montenegro and Army*, written by Mehmed Subhi. This work composed of 95 pages has been published in 1900 in Istanbul.⁶ The author was one of the lieutenant commanders in the Ottoman army and taught courses on the Ottoman State, Foreign State Relations and Military Organizations at the Military Academy. This book has also been prepared for instructional purposes to be used in the Ottoman Royal School of War Sciences.

The author states that his aim for writing this book is to introduce Montenegro to the military world. He also expressed that Europeans did attempt to write about Montenegro’s military order and organization, because they did not have any military aims concerning Montenegro or any significant political relations with them. In his “introduction”, he also claims that although there is some information about Montenegro’s forces in foreign military chronics and periodicals, they do not reveal the real situation and include fictional accounts as well. According to him, while general information might be sufficient for European states, it is not the case for the Ottomans: “*for the Ottomans to be ignorant of their geographical circumstances and conditions –to the least important pathways on which goats roam-, or about their military forces to the last single ammunition is incompatible with our nonvolatile relations*”.

A third book on Montenegro is a translation entitled “*Geography of Montenegro*”. This book composed of 60 pages has been published in 1909.⁷ It has been translated from Serbian to Ottoman Turkish by Ahmed Tevfik,

⁶ Original title is *Karadağ ve Ordusu*. (Mehmed Subhi, *Karadağ Ve Ordusu*, Feridiye Matba’ası, 10 Mart 317.)

⁷ Original title is *Karadağ Coğrafyası*. (Ahmed Tevfik, *Karadağ Coğrafyası*, Erkân-I Harbiyye , 27 Şubat 325.)

the commander of Edremid Redif brigade. Since Ahmed Tevfik stayed in Montenegro on military duty, he added his personal knowledge and experiences to this book regarding Montenegro. This additional part was detached from the original text with the heading “m” signifying “malumat” = knowledge. The original Serbian title and writer of the book are unknown. Ahmed Tevfik translated the work on the General Staff’s demand, whose sole aim was to complete their knowledge about Montenegro’s territory, geography, administrative structure and organization⁸.

This book is made up of two chapters. The first chapter provides information about Montenegro’s land, significant locations, administrative structure, agriculture and its commercial activities. Information has been given under subheadings according to the ten nahiye (nahiye means administrative subdivision) as follows: Katun, Rijeka, Črmenica, Primorska, Lešnska, Zeta, Brdska, Morača, Vasojević, Nikšić. The second part of the book is completely devoted to Montenegro’s geography such as its mountains, rivers and lakes.

Ahmed Tevfik added a part composed of 6 pages at the end of the translation as result of his research and a tabulated list of roads suitable for military operations as well as a list on Montenegro’s government’s yearly tax income and comments on their procedures.

Aforementioned three works were composed during the reign of the Sultan Abdülhamid II. It is interesting that all the three authors were familiar with the regions of Montenegro, its language and were all military figures. This is an indication that these works were produced or translated for military purposes alongside their initial purpose setting a direction to Ottoman foreign policies.

Mehmed Subhi’s book was written for instruction in the Military Academy while Ahmed Tevfik’s translation was demanded by the General Staff. There are also a quite numbers of books written and published after the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II.

The fourth book entitled *Military Strategy and Defense in Montenegrens* written by another military figure Ahmed Sedad was published on July 23 1911.⁹ It can be presumed that its publication was linked with the national holiday celebrations.¹⁰ Ahmed Sedad was then the lieutenant commander of the general staff. He indicated that a few military books have been written

⁸ Ahmed Tevfik, *Karadağ Coğrafyası*, p. 60

⁹ Original title is *Karadağlılarda Sevkü'l-Ceyş Ve Ta'biyye*. (Ahmed Sedad, *Karadağlılarda Sevkü'l-Ceyş Ve Ta'biyye*, Mekteb-İ Harbiyye Matba'ası, 10 Temmûz 1327.)

¹⁰ After the dethronement of Sultan Abdülhamid II on July 23, 1908 and proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the day was celebrated as a national holiday. See Sanem Yamak, “Meşrutiyetin Bayramı: “10 Temmuz İd-i Millisi”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 38/2008, pp. 323–342.

about Montenegro in Ottoman Turkish prior to his work, mentioning that the most current one was the book published by the General Staff without giving the book's title. Since this book encompassed Montenegro's army, its organization, arms and armaments and potential force, Ahmed Sedad excluded these topics in his book and showed considerable concern for the combating techniques of Montenegro's army. According to him:

This book is neither a history of warfare nor a book on organization. It has been produced with the aim of present the techniques of combat of the Montenegrins. In order to illustrate this more clearly, it contains evaluations about some of the stages of the Ottoman-Montenegrin wars between 1876 and 1878. The structure and organization of the Montenegro's army and existing military force is not the subjects under discussion. Information about the financial condition of the army belongs to the past.

The fifth military figure to have published books about Montenegro in Ottoman Turkish is lieutenant general Ismail Fazıl (Cebesoy) Pasha. Ismail Fazıl Pasha served in key positions in the Ottoman army and also provincial at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, he took part in the campaign of Ottoman-Montenegro before the outbreak of the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. Ismail Fazıl Pasha served in Shkoder and Herzegovina divisions ranked with captain and later lieutenant commander in 1878.¹¹ His first *Ottoman-Montenegro Campaign of 1877-1878*¹² appeared in 1913 in Istanbul. His second book was also published in the same year in Istanbul entitled *A Page from the Distinguished Armed Forces*¹³ in which he gave highly valuable information about the military personal in charge of Ottoman-Russian War and also of the Ottoman-Montenegrin campaign of 1877-1878.

These works published at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, were probably composed with the didactic purpose of providing information for the political and military milieu of the time and thus they all give considerably significant information and knowledge about the history of Montenegro, its geography, administration, army, people, mode of life and culture.

¹¹ Tülay Ercöşkun, *İsmail Fazıl Paşa'nın (Cebesoy) Islahata Dair Görüşleri*, A.Ü. DTCF Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi, Ankara, 26/42 (2007), pp 181-199; M.Çadırcı- Tülay Ercöşkun, *Ferik İsmail Fazıl Paşa'nın Doğu Anadolu Islahatıyla İlgili Görüşleri*, Uluslararası Tatvan ve Çevresi Sempozyumu, Beyan Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008, pp. 309-326; İsmet Türkmen, *I. TBMM Hükümeti Döneminde İsmail Fazıl Paşa'nın Nafla Vekilliği Görevi (1920-1921)*, Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Cilt: X, Sayı 3, 2008, pp. 135-158.

¹² Original title is *1292-1293 Osmanlı-Karadağ Seferi*. (İsmail Fazıl Paşa, *1292-1293 Osmanlı-Karadağ Seferi*, Necm-i İstikbal Matba'ası, İstanbul 1329)

¹³ Original title is *Meşahir-i Askerimizden Bir Sayfa*. (İsmail Fazıl Paşa, *Meşahir-i Askerimizden Bir Sayfa*, Necm-i İstikbal Matba'ası, İstanbul 1329)

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Summary

According to author, these works published at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, were probably composed with the didactic purpose of providing information for the political and military milieu of the time and thus, they all give considerably significant information and knowledge about the history of Montenegro, its geography, administration, army, people, mode of life and culture.