

**Could Have, Would Have, Should Have:  
Belgradi Raşid and the Rhetoric of  
Disillusionment and Resentment in his *History  
of Strange Events***

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## Abstract

This work is about the chronicle of Raşid Bey of Belgrade (ca. 1870) which is an unique source for provincial Ottoman Muslim sensibilities in the age of the empire's gradual retreat from the region. I propose to look at his subjective view on events as an alternative to the views from the archives that dominates historiography in this respect. In the light of the episodes from Raşid Bey's chronicle, this paper will demonstrate the importance of such narratives in depicting the manner in which macro history was perceived and furthermore reflected on the micro level, in our case, among the (Ottoman) population in the *pashalık* of Belgrade. Raşid's account has shown how the repercussions of the policies conducted by the Imperial Centre were felt within his region of residence. Lamenting and disillusionment over the imminent loss of the Balkans is the key issue in Raşid's work.

***In Loving Memory of my Cousin Drago***

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## Introduction

This study aims to capture one nineteenth-century Muslim voice in the Ottoman Balkans based on the chronicle *Ta'rîh-i Vak'a-ı Hayret-nümâ-yı Belgrad ve Sırbistan* of Raşid Bey, a prominent “citizen” of the Belgrade *paşalık* (i.e., territory ruled by a *paşa*). It does not intend to provide empirical data but rather to discuss his representation of the events and developments that marked the region during a time of upheaval and rapid transformation. Moreover, this work will rely less on the “big-structural” discourses of nationalism, the *Tanzîmât* (Age of Reform) and so-called “Eastern Question” that dominate narratives about the nineteenth-century Balkans. In order to contribute to the understanding of this Ottoman periphery in the “Age of Revolution,” my thesis will focus on subjectivity and the manner in which the past was represented and appropriated in Raşid Bey’s work.

This thesis is in a dialog with Raşid’s text. In an attempt to move beyond “black and white” Muslim versus Christian narratives that reign in historiography on the period, I seek to contextualize Raşid Bey’s narrative and its strategies not solely within the framework of the rising Balkan nationalisms but rather of the grievances that Ottoman Muslims in the provinces harboured both toward their government İstanbul and their non-Muslim neighbours. In doing so, I argue that not only shall we obtain a unique insight into the Ottoman mindset on the local level but also realize that one of the keys for understanding the Balkans in the Age of Revolutions lies in “listening” to “alternative” Muslim voices that are squelched by ubiquitous narratives about Christian uprisings and nationalism. Moreover, I will argue that these alternative, frontier voices offer correctives to the way in which we describe imperial, “macro” politics and policies that we glean from elite sources such as



imperial chronicles or official archival sources. Raşid's history writing was neither commissioned by the Ottoman sultan nor did his determination to record the events emanate from the urge to support unconditionally the acts of the Imperial centre. On the contrary, by means of writing his narrative as a dialogue between two brothers, his main protagonists namely Akil ve Nakil Bey, Raşid enables himself to criticize, condemn and reprove at his convenience, never having to worry about the consequences of his written words.

Chapter One of this thesis will provide the theoretical background in terms of Raşid's fitting into late Ottoman historiography. Chapter Two will introduce the reader to the structure of Raşid's work, his topics of interest as well as my discussion regarding the agendas and perspectives that he was trying to convey to his readers. Chapter Three will deal with the manner in which Raşid most likely perceived the *serhad* (i.e., frontier) in the Danubian region near Belgrade at a time in which circumstances culminating in the "long" nineteenth century brought the final loss of Ottoman Serbia. It will also explore how important the *serhad* was for local Muslims who understood that their defence of these lands represented the defence of their very existence and faith. Likewise, Chapter Four will demonstrate how Raşid saw the retraction of Islam from this frontier city as emblematic of the overall repudiation of Islamic supremacy and cultural domination throughout the Balkans. It is important to note that my analysis of Raşid's work draws on his interpretation of past events in crafting the history of the region. In what follows I provide the reader with information on Raşid's life and work.

In short, Raşid was a well-regarded Ottoman-Muslim clerk in mid-nineteenth-century Belgrade. His two-volume manuscript, of which the second volume remains unpublished, represents a unique and undeservedly overlooked source for the study of Belgrade and its *paşalık* a decade prior to the Ottomans' final departure from the area in 1867. Unfortunately, information regarding Raşid's life is scarce and does not reveal much about his private life.

Neither does the manuscript itself. Only two historians provide us with detailed information regarding Rašid's life, one of them being Selim Aslantaş, a modern historian with a specialization in nineteenth-century Serbian history, and the other, Stojan Novaković, a nineteenth-century Serbian politician, diplomat and philologist who wrote an introduction for the only translation of Rašid's work from Ottoman by yet another nineteenth-century Serbian author, Dimitrije Čohadzić.

While Aslantaş asserts that Rašid Bey was of Bosnian origin, Novaković affirms that we cannot know with certainty if he belonged to a "real Ottoman family" or to a "converted Slavic one."<sup>1</sup> What is certain, however, is that he had a family in Bosnia that he had been supporting as much as he could. According to Novaković, Rašid Bey was not a wealthy man, but he did live better than "all the other Turks in Belgrade." He possessed a "real Turkish *konak*" (i.e., mansion) according to Novaković, with a huge library filled with "Serbian and Turkish books." Rašid was, as Novaković claimed to have found out, "one of those rare people in Belgrade who wore the cloths of the European, Istanbul fashion." He was literate and interested in making maps. Yet another one of Rašid's contemporaries, a Serbian police official named Nikola Hristić also mentions him in his "Memoirs" as "a simple citizen" who lived on his own income and as a person very close to the post of *paşa*.<sup>2</sup>

Rašid served as the fiscal director and accountant under the command of the wardens of Belgrade and was charged with mediating property disputes between Serbs and Muslims. In 1852, according to Aslantaş, Rašid left his family in Belgrade and moved to Bosnia to serve the *paşa* and returned to Belgrade in the year of 1858. In 1860, he continues, Belgradi Rašid

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<sup>1</sup>For all the data on Râsid's life available, see: Selim Aslantaş ([www.ottomanhistorians.com](http://www.ottomanhistorians.com)) and Novaković, Stojan., "O ovoj knjizi i pisci njenu." Rašid-Beja istorija čudnovatih događaja u Beogradu i Srbiji, trans. S. Čohadzić (Belgrade, 1894), Belgradi Râsid., "Tarîh-i Vak'a-i Hayret-nümâ-i Belgrad ve Sîrbistân., Vol.1., (introduction) p. IV.

<sup>2</sup> Nikola Hristić., *Memoari: 1840-1862.*, [ ed. Vitomir Hristić ]. – Prosveta., Belgrade, 2006., p. 439.

was invited to Istanbul to participate in sessions of the Council of Reforms (*Meclis-i Tanzîmât*) regarding the land-distribution in Bosnia.<sup>3</sup> It is also very well known, as Novaković notes, that he was resentful towards Miloš Obrenović and the whole Obrenović dynasty and was rather considered a friend of Knez Aleksandar Karadjordjević and well-accepted in his circle<sup>4</sup> e). When in 1862 the Muslim population left the city of Belgrade and left only soldiers behind, Rašid Bey left, too. He joined his friend Osman Paşa in Sarajevo, where he kept on following developments in Belgrade, as Novaković points out, “with all the hatred as he did before.”<sup>5</sup> Belgradi Rašid died in Istanbul ca. 1882-83. He held the rank of *paşa* and earned a *Mecîdiyye* medal of the third degree.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of the general bibliography on Rašid, there is only one more other examination of Rašid’s chronicle in English language, namely Rhoads Murphey’s article based merely on the first volume of *Hayret-nümâ*. In the present work, I choose from an array of topics that Rašid engaged in order to flesh out Rašid’s disillusionment and resentment generated by the downfall of the Ottoman supremacy in the Balkans and contextualize it in a larger discussion of late Ottoman imperial history.

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<sup>3</sup> Aslantaş on ottomanhistorians.com

<sup>4</sup> Miloš Obrenović’s despotic rule (1815-1839) gave the impetus for several mutinies carried out by the Serbian people. In the year of 1835 Miloš’s autocracy was restricted by newly implemented Constitution (*Ustav*). Not only Miloš, but also Austria, Russia and the Porte acted against this Constitution. As a result, it was in force only for two weeks. The latter’s rivals, the so-called Defenders of the Constitution, continued to seek ways of curbing Obrenović’s power and was finally accomplished by the promulgation of the Constitution in the year of 1838. Miloš, unwilling to share his power with the Council (*Sovjet*), decides to abdicate in 1839. He was succeeded by his son Milan who died after only a month. After his other son Mihailo’s being forced to leave Serbia in 1842 as well, the Defenders of the Constitution elected a new prince, Karadjordje’s son Aleksandar. The struggle for authority between two dynasties was perpetuated until 1858 when Miloš Obrenović came to power again.

<sup>5</sup> Novaković., p. VIII.

<sup>6</sup> Aslantaş on ottomanhistorians.com.

## Chapter I

### Chroniclers as Messengers: Crafting Historical Writing in the (Late) Ottoman Empire

Was this a real scene? Or was it a fiction that my well-intentioned and good-natured memory had made up on the spot to console a broken man like me?<sup>7</sup>

- Orhan Pamuk, *A New Life*

In a historiographical tradition almost exclusively based on accounts of the “victors,” it is significant that Raşid’s text is written from an Ottoman Balkan perspective. His *Ta’rîh-i Vak’a-i Hayret-nümâ-i Belgrad ve Sırbistan* represents a rather unique source for the nineteenth-century Ottoman province inasmuch as Raşid’s interpretation of the situation stands in contrast to the manner in which Imperial chroniclers in Istanbul understood and wrote about the loss of Ottoman Balkans. In this chapter I will discuss the conflicting ways people understood, represented, and appropriated the historical events in the late Ottoman Empire. In order to appreciate Raşid’s *Hayret-nümâ* and its contribution to our understanding of the manner in which this region operated in the period in question, I find it necessary to discuss some similar works of the Serbian historiography in order to compare their narratives and world-views with Raşid’s. In this regard, let us be reminded of Vuk Karadžić, a prominent Serbian intellectual known for his collections of folk poems and tales as well as his *Historical Writings (Istorijski spisi)*, who died in the year of 1864 just a few years before

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<sup>7</sup> As cited in: Erika Bourguignon. “Bringing the past into the Present: Family Narratives of Holocaust, Exile, and Diaspora: Memory in an Amnesic World: Holocaust, Exile, and the Return of the Suppressed”, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Winter, 2005), pp. 63-88., p. 64.

Rašid wrote his chronicle. The book of *Memoirs* written in 1830s by one of the leaders of the Serbian revolution, namely Prota Mateja Nenadović is yet another important source for the events emanating from the turn of the century that Rašid is also so fervent about. Evidently, even before Rašid wrote his account, there had already existed certain chronicles written to attest the fundamental changes that this part of the Empire was experiencing at the time. The abovementioned authors represent a counterpart to Rašid's viewpoint insofar as they belong to the "other" side but had all lived through, experienced, and were also major protagonists of the (Serbian) insurrection and its aftermath. Their projections of the events, regardless of their biases, help as obtain an insight into the troubles, worries and mindsets of the local population.

### **1.1. Chroniclers as Historical Witnesses: The Case of the (Late) Ottoman Empire**

This section seeks neither to look at the nineteenth century Serbian national historiography that "celebrates" the eventual deliberation from the "Turkish yoke" nor to analyze Rašid's chronicle in comparison to those works. Rather, it seeks to discuss why men like Rašid took up their pens to comment on the events that were changing the world as they knew it. Moreover, it will point out the benefit of scrutinizing such sources in studying nineteenth century historiography, more concretely, those works' joint contribution to our understanding of history beyond official archival documents.

In our (Ottoman) case, the developments from the very beginning of the nineteenth century onwards had produced some chronicle writers in Serbian historiography who portrayed the Serbian uprising as a milestone emblematic of the gradual Serbian reawakening. The significance of Prota Mateja's memoirs lays in the fact that he was an important figure of the Serbian insurrection and a son of *knez* (chief magistrate) Aleksa

Nenadović who was killed in 1804 by the infamous Belgrade janissaries, the so-called *dayis*.<sup>8</sup> The extent to which these *Memoirs* differ from Rašid's interpretation of the same events might be inspected as a separate topic for a more comprehensive study of the First Serbian uprising (its aftermath and even the pre-revolutionary atmosphere) along with other similar works of Serbian historiography. Such a wide-ranging study based only on the accounts of the eye-witnesses could contribute to our better understanding of the social dynamics on the local level, the intra-confessional relations and circumstances that brought about the "Age of Revolutions". To that point, another account of the Serbian author, namely Maksim Evgenović and his *Životopis* (Autobiography) represent a unique source for the pre-revolutionary Western Serbia region.<sup>9</sup> He belonged to a wealthy family of Užice and was very well acquainted with the trading conditions of the region prior the insurrection during which he left to Pest. Finally, *Žizniopisanija Moja* (My Life Story) written by Nićifor Ninković is a valuable source for its main sentiments are identical to those of Rašid's: resentment and disillusionment.<sup>10</sup> He came from Sremski Dobrinči (in the Vojvodina) to Serbia in 1807 when he was 19 years old. At one point he becomes Miloš Obrenović's barber, and that was a period when he felt most humiliated by this illiterate man's way of treating him. Ninković was eventually fired from the service and compelled to look for a new home outside the borders of Serbia. After some time he spent wandering in Wallachia, Istanbul and Smyrna (where he started to write his memoirs), he returned to Belgrade. The depiction of Miloš's crudeness and ill-temper are the crucial elements of this chronicle. That being said, his work relates to that of Rašid for the latter had the same stance towards Obrenović and his misdeeds. It would be more than beneficial to compare these two authors'

<sup>8</sup> Protá Matija Nenadović, *Memoari*, (ed.) Teodora Petrović, Beograd-Noví Sad., 1969.

<sup>9</sup> Maksim Evgenović, *Životopis Maksima Evgenovića* (Autobiography of Maksim Evgenović) Budapest., 1870.

<sup>10</sup> Nićifor Ninković. *Žizniopisanija Moja* (My Life Story)., (ed.) Toma Popović., Nolit-Belgrade., 1988.

subjective approaches on the same person/events in interpreting Miloš's rule and the nature of his relationship with the Ottoman side.

The only scholar who discussed the importance of Raşid's work regarding the information he provided in his *Hayret-nümâ* Rhoads Murphey, argued that this history is "by far the most detailed and accurate account we possess for the internal history of Serbia in the early nineteenth century."<sup>11</sup> Murphey's decision to portray Raşid's work as an excellent repository of facts is problematic inasmuch as Raşid's history is clearly his version of the "truth".

Along these lines, we could investigate the manner in which local histories can contribute to the understanding of Empire's overall state of affairs. It seems rather challenging to determine how much of a writers' or chronicler's agenda is actually embodied in their histories and the extent to which such histories help us go beyond assumptions derived from official documents. Any plausible assertion regarding the usefulness of a chronicle such as Raşid's *Hayret-nümâ* entails a scrutiny of its writer's background, sphere of influence and system of beliefs as well as the environment he lived in. In order to understand the complexity of a multi-religious and multi-ethnic polity like the Ottoman Empire, it seems to be rather advantageous to consult many "alternative" voices across the Empire and investigate how the same issues/problems were perceived and reflected in different parts of the state. To that point, Raşid's work is of great importance. Not only is it a rare source for the region and period in question, but it also could serve as an example in comparing/examining how some people "non-elite" people or rather "middling" social actors

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<sup>11</sup> Rhoads Murphey: "The city of Belgrade in the early years of Ottoman-Serbian self rule and dual administration with the Ottomans: Vignettes from Rasid's history illuminating the transformation of a Muslim metropolis of the Balkans." in Andreas Tietze (ed.) *Habsburgisch osmanische Beziehungen. Relations Habsbourg-ottomanes*. Wien, 26.-30. September 1983 Comité des Études Ottomanes et Pré-Ottomanes (CIÉPO) colloque (Wien, Institute für Orientalistik, 1985), pp. 281-293., p. 290.

within the Ottoman Empire had witnessed the current developments. In her study on an eighteenth century barber from Damascus who decided to write down the events taking place in his lifetime, Dana Sajdi has recently raised some significant questions in this regard. What is it about the contemporary chronicle, Sajdi asks, that made it a genre so readily appropriable by commoners from the early modern period when they first appeared?<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the author examines another issue of relevance for this study case: what is in the culture of the 18th century that allowed commoners to speak?<sup>13</sup> More importantly, as Sajdi points out, is it valuable to ask what does the commoner do to the contemporary chronicle and what does the contemporary chronicle do for him?<sup>14</sup> The answers applicable to both cases, in short, seem to be grounded on the following premises: by means of writing a chronicle, the writer seizes a chance to express his emotions/thoughts in order to be heard, while at the same time he provides the reader with the information “from below.” Interpreting every chronicle’s (personal) agenda is another issue, but the very existence of such chroniclers’ works enables us to obtain another perspective on the matters of importance in our understanding of how one society functioned from within.

Raşid’s narrative was not always in favour of the Ottoman dynasty as he often criticizes and blames it for the unsuccessful governing of the state. While at the same time describing the overall situation in the nineteenth-century *paşâlık* of Belgrade, Raşid furthermore singles out whom he believed were culprits for the decline of both the Empire and the supremacy of Islam for that matter. In the light of general historiographical works produced in this period, it would be beneficial to discuss briefly Raşid’s unabashedly emotional style full of sentiments of love and hate compare to that

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<sup>12</sup> Dana Sajdi. “A Room of His Own: The ‘History’ of the Barber of Damascus (fl. 1762), *The MIT Electric Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3 (Fall, 2003): 19-35., p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 19.



of the contemporary official state chroniclers. Along the same lines, how are the topics they discuss similar, and where do they diverge? To that point, looking back to (late) eighteenth-century historical writing, Virginia Aksan points to the “Ottoman incapability” to deal with the ever-growing European threat as one of the key features of Ottoman historiography of the period.<sup>15</sup> Looking at Raşid’s chronicle, one might reach the same conclusion. Frequent episodes involving Russian agitation with regard to “the Serbian question” on the macro, and foreign consulates’ interference into local issues on the micro level, prove once again that the “outside threats” had an impact on the Empire’s overall functioning. She identifies Ottoman political writing as the best reflection of the “internal perceptions” of the prevailing conditions at the time. For the Ottoman chroniclers the eighteenth century (especially the period from the Küçük Kaynarca treaty of 1774) was a period when the Empire felt torn by, broadly speaking, two major choices/concerns: how, if at all, to reform the state and its apparatus without harming its Islamic disposition. Even though he wrote in the second half of the nineteenth century, Raşid’s standpoint relates to this issue in that he is writing from the Ottoman frontier that was experiencing the repercussions of the both, the grants given to the Serbs on the local level mostly in the shape of new freedoms for the local Christians. While the late eighteenth-century chroniclers had obviously thought that the preservation of Islam’s supremacy was possible, in Raşid’s eyes, if Ottoman Islam’s supremacy could have remained intact the vitality of the Ottoman state would have not been endangered. On multiple occasions, Raşid witnesses “the hardship of the people of Islam” (*ahâli-yi Islâm*) and the “torture” they were exposed to on the part of the Serbs.

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<sup>15</sup> Virginia Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing, 1768-1808,” *IJMES* Vol 25, No. 1 (Feb. 1993): 53-69., p. 56.

An Ottoman elite writer and a person of a more modest background like Raşid might have had some similar agendas. To that point, it is important to note that by the end of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman elite believed that every individual was supposed to be in service of the *din ü devlet* (serving the state and religion), which is also true in Raşid's case.

## **1.2. Two Sides of the Same Story: Raşid Bey and Nikola Hristić as Witnesses of the Competing Realities**

Nikola Hristić was a chief of the Serbian police. He was appointed Governor of Belgrade *Varoş* (1856) and later on became the Minister of internal affairs (1860). As a police officer, Hristić was in a position to intervene into disputes between Muslims and their Christian neighbours. In his *Memoirs*, this Serbian author writes down various incidents/events that occurred in the streets of Belgrade. In doing so, Hristić tries to show how the macro politics reflected on the lives of the ordinary people.

In what follows I will point out is the very existence of two different narratives of the same event serves us as an illustration of the importance such an event had for the both sides, i.e. both of the authors in question. What it is interesting is that both authors claim to have been on the scene. We are not certainly looking for the “truth” lying behind the occurrence taking place but rather acknowledging that both writers find it necessary to put an emphasis on this event in their chronicle/memoirs. Despite their different agendas, they seem to have had the very same aim: to produce a work that will offer to its reader an insight into how they understood and villanized their neighbouring enemy.

Even though Nikola Hristić was not a person “from below” but a state official (policeman), as a mediator between the Serbian authorities and the population of Belgrade at the time, he was very well informed about social changes taking place in the period of his service (1840-1856). Let us be reminded that with respect to the administration in the city of

Belgrade, the 1850s were the years when the Muslim and Serbian authorities struggled and competed to extend their domain of jurisdiction. The city of Belgrade was divided into two parts, the *varoş* (translate) and the fortress, with the former being surrounded by the trench (Serbian: Šanac). While the fortress was under the absolute authority of the Belgrade *paşas* and his imperial soldiers (the so-called *nizâms*) situated within the fortress, the situation in the Belgrade *varoş* was much different. It was surrounded by a trench and divided into two parts, one of which was under Serbian and the other under the Ottoman rule. The trench itself “belonged” to both the Ottomans and the Serbs and thus frequently served as the stage for conflicts between the two parties. Be it a “simple” quarrel between an ordinary Muslim and Serb, or large-scale conflicts between Ottoman soldiers and Serbian policemen (*pandurs*), daily life in the city of Belgrade was much filled with tension and uncertainty. For example, in the year of 1845 a clash occurred between the Muslim *nizâm* and a Serbian *pandur*, the consequence of which exasperated the already existing rift between the two religious groups in the city of Belgrade.

According to Râsid, the incident occurred because the Serbs had resented the *asâkir-i nizâmiyye* (translation) and were always “greatly desirous to provoke more and more disturbance”.<sup>16</sup> As Raşid continues, when the *çavuş* was passing next to the church with one of the ‘askers (soldier), a *mel’un* (damned) Serbian *pandur* pulled his gun and fired at the *çavuş* (guard), wounding him in the arm.<sup>17</sup> The bullet, however, hit another Serb standing in

<sup>16</sup> *Belgradi Raşid, Tâ’rih-i Vak’a-i Hayret-nümâ-i Belgrad ve Sırbistan.*, Vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1291/1874), p.4. “...Asâkir-i Nizâmiyye-i Şâhâneye eğri bakmakta ve yine bir fesâd uyandırmğa teşne bulduklarından karagol-hâne-i mezkûr çavuşlarından dirîsi refâkatinde bulunan bir nefer alup (parol) almak üzere kal’a-i zirde kâin kışlaya hareket ve avdetlerinde ahşam dahi teterrûb edüp Varoş mahallesinde vâki kilise önüden geçerlerken (Vartornık) yani mahalle gözcüsü deyu her bir mahalleye Sırb hükümeti tarafından tertîp bulunan bekçi pandorı bulunan capık nâm-ı melûn hemân hâd-be-hâd tabancasını çekip çavuş merkûma endâhât ve biraz kolundan yaralayup ol esnada duvar kenârında bulunana diğer bir Sırbıya dahş mezkûr kurşun vanası isâbet edüp...”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

the vicinity and killed him. The wounded *çavus* escaped to the *karakol-hane* (police-headquarters) and the *paşa* was informed about the event.

Nikola Hristić, on the other hand, retells the event fundamentally differently than Râsid.<sup>18</sup> According to Hristić, two “Turkish” *nizâms* passing by the church, stopped and started urinating publicly next to the entrance.<sup>19</sup> The Serbian *pandur* warned them several times, but not only did they refuse to obey, but they also started an altercation and physically attacked the *pandur*. A bunch of angry Serbs along with the students of theology who happened to be present in the church, gathered to witness the accident. When the *pandur* pulled a gun in self-defence, one of the two *nizâms* hit him on the hand. Consequently, the gun fell to the ground. One *nizâm* picked it up and aimed at the *pandur*, shooting but missing his target. One of the students, however, was hit by that bullet and died instantly on the spot.<sup>20</sup>

The “truth” is different for each of the authors, but it is of great importance to acknowledge both authors’ urge to mention this event in their chronicles. To that point, the question of what is wrong with urinating on each other’s sacred shrines in the nineteenth century emerges as a plausible one. The fact that *Tanzimat* reforms implied legal inter-confessional equality brings about the issue of how we are to contextualize these kind of incidents within the framework of those newly established patterns of social behaviour. Religious competition was, as this event clearly shows, an inseparable element of the social

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<sup>18</sup> Hristić., p.107., “...Dva turska nizama sa straže varoš-kapijske, prošav pored srpske Saborne crkve oko 10 časova pre podne, stanu uza samu portu javno mokreći. Služitelj srpske policije, pozornik Džampić, spazi ovo i naviče na njih i terao ih da onde ne mokre, no oni ne samo (da) ne poslušase no uđu s njime u svađu i potegnu na njega tesake. Na tu larmu skupi se mlogo srpskog sveta, i među njima stekli se i đaci Bogoslovije, koja je bila onde do crkvene porte. Džampić izvuče svoj pištolj iz silava da bi se od napada nizama odbranio, no nizam jedan udari ga silno tesakom po ruci i pištolj padne na zemlju. Nizam ga brzo dohvati i na Džampića ispali, ali ne pogodi njega, no zgodi jednog đaka iz Bogoslovije, i ubije ga na mesto...”

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

dynamics in mid-nineteenth century Belgrade. The existence of a dual administration meant giving concessions to the Christian component in the city and symbolized the weakening of the Ottoman authority. What did then (religious) tolerance mean for the people on the ground? Religious tolerance within the realm of the Balkans (up until its recent history) did not mean embracing the Other, but rather pragmatic adaptation to a situation in which control of the Others' practices may not be possible.<sup>21</sup> That said, the following question rises: Could the urination in front of the church have been considered as a "pragmatic adaption" to the new circumstances generated by the Serbs' getting the permission to build a new church already in 1830? It seems that practising religious rituals in this period relates to the degree of the political dominance exerted. More concretely, religious rituals (or hindering the Other to practise those rituals) compensates for the lack of full authority and it produces the feeling of superiority over the neighbouring enemy.

Nineteenth century Belgrade *pashalik* was a period of both Ottoman decline and gradual Serbian independence. These developments certainly colored present chronicles in terms of the author's existing agendas. Every chronicle and/or memoirs was written in accordance with author's perceptions or the messages he wanted to convey. We have already mentioned how regional histories from different parts of the Empire enable us to understand more easily how the gradual decline of Ottoman supremacy reflected in those regions within Empire's domain. In this regard, it is important to note, an in-depth analysis of the setting they are describing, namely the *paşalık* of Belgrade seems to be more manageable with two different standpoints from within one and the same region (even city).

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<sup>21</sup> Robert M. Hayden. "Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans," in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April, 2002): 205-231., p.219.

## Chapter II

### Interpreting Raşid's Point of View: A Guidance to Understanding his Language of Grievance

This chapter will look at the structure of Raşid's work, the underlying themes and the possible agenda that he was trying to convey to his readers. What does Raşid render as crucial for his public to understand? What does he perceive as an event strange enough to be mentioned in his chronicle?

#### 2.1. Who is Raşid Writing Against?

Raşid's determination to present himself as a "simple notary" and not a complete author of *Hayret-nümâ* brings about the question of why he was hesitant to acknowledge that he was expressing a personal point of view.<sup>22</sup> Raşid, more concretely, admits being brave enough only to define this repository of Akil and Nakil Bey's words written by him, as only history (in addition to that of Ahmed Cevdet's, the most prominent official historian of the late Ottoman Empire) to deliver past to its reader exactly the way it happened and with no fear at all. This history expresses both his vehemently negative feelings towards the Serbs and often times serious criticism directed towards the Ottoman government as well. If we decide not to

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<sup>22</sup> Hayret-nümâ., Vol.2., p.1 (*takrîzât/introduction*)...Çünkü târîh-i mezkûr bütün bütüne çıkırından çıkmış ima'ya ibtidâr ve doğru Akıl ve Nâkil Bey'lerin iş bu eserlerine bir diycek olmayup ve bu yolda kaleme alınması ve böyle doğruca ve pervasızca beyân'ı hâl edilmiş hiç bir târîh görülmemiş ez gayrı Târîh-i Cevdet olduğu tasdîk eylemekten başka çare bulamadığımdan haddim olmayarak garezsizce bir beyân ı hâl ile bu kadarca bir söze cür'et edilmiştir.

go further than the assumption that ascribing his words to the imaginary brothers was only a result of his fear for his own safety given the time and place when he was writing,<sup>23</sup> we may go on to ask who was the public Raşid was writing for and why his history should concern us.

To begin with, Raşid's account is a unique source in its approach inasmuch as it represents an "alternative" voice of nineteenth-century Ottoman Rumeli. As opposed to the authors from the Imperial centre writing on Ottoman provinces, his narrative is mostly based on his own personal experience of developments that led to the demise of Ottoman power in Rumeli. In order to shed a light at the reasons of the reduction of Ottoman supremacy in this area, it would be helpful to relate his work to the work of the nineteenth century historian and politician, Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, and compare the two authors' interpretation of the certain relevant or even same events, if possible.

Although it is not exactly obvious whom Cevdet represented, it is doubtless that as one successful 'âlim and vezîr later on, he could not have (faithfully) represented anyone but a certain layer of the Ottoman political elite. Raşid, on the other hand, was holding a more modest post that potentially makes him a spokesman of more ordinary Muslims on a frontier in decline. Nonetheless, as the situation in the city of Belgrade was very chaotic and politically uncertain, he might have had an additional personal agenda. Moreover, being one of the wealthier people in the city and very close to the *paşa* of Belgrade, he could not have avoided the feeling of despair and animosity towards those who were taking over the authority as well as the property of the Muslim population of Belgrade. We cannot know with certainty whether Raşid's thoughts and actions were peculiar to the people in his community, i.e., whether he was a "typical" representative or a mere spokesman for the politics that local *paşas* were engaging. On many occasions, however, Raşid expresses his sorrow and/or anger

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<sup>23</sup> Let us be reminded that the period when Râşid wrote his *Hayret-nümâ*, namely 1870s, was a period of perpetuate political instability in the *paşalık* of Belgrade. The Ottoman soldiers left the Belgrade fortress already in the 1867.

over those same *paşas*' inability to restore their once firm authority and properly fight Serbian ascendancy. Stylistically and structurally the work features a discontinuous flow of thoughts interrupted by a patchwork of incoherently connected issues that are not only indicative of the author's lack of literary refinement but also make the task of analyzing the points he makes in his account more difficult.

"Ahmed Cevdet Paşa perceived the aim of writing history as being that of providing lessons by showing the mistakes of the past"<sup>24</sup>. Raşid's aim to "provide lessons," despite being biased, seems to have intended to point what should have been done in the city of Belgrade so that the well being of the Ottoman Empire could have remained unhurt and the supremacy of the Islam in the Balkans would have persisted. The episodes from Raşid's chronicle further in this thesis will reflect the overall tone of his work, but the question of whom he wanted to convey his message to is highly debatable. One possible way of designating Raşid's primary public is to relate to his Serbian contemporaries writing at the time in an attempt to decipher for whom they were aiming at when presenting the "truth." Whose lives were these writers trying to impact, especially at the turn of the nineteenth century when the majority of population was illiterate? In this regard, it is interesting to mention a book of an anonymous writer who travelled to Venice and printed his book in 1815, since the printing press did not exist in Serbia at the time.<sup>25</sup> This book, *Plačevno Srbije i pakiporoblenie* (Lamenting Serbia and its re-enslavement in year 1813 – Why and how?) was written in a form of a dialogue between an enslaved mother and one of her sons, elaborating on the reasons for a downfall of the Serbian Uprising in the 1813. It could be

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<sup>24</sup> Halaçoğlu, Yusuf, in Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Ma'rûzât*, edited by Yusuf Halaçoğlu (Istanbul, 1980), p. xii. as in: Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered.*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2007., pp. 12.

<sup>25</sup> I thank to my colleague Vladimir Jovanović from Historical Institute in Belgrade for sharing this information as well as the draft of his forthcoming article: "Good" Turks and the "evil" ones – multiple perspectives on Turkish community reflected in Serbian sources of the early 19th century



said, therefore, that even though these narratives had no wide public and were not fully appropriated by a wide body of common people at the time, in the long term, those chroniclers' depictions of "evil" Turks or "damn" Serbs (as in Raşid's case) could have served as a cornerstone for (national) historiographical writings as they clearly coloured the past by means of distinguishing "them" from "us".

Raşid was confident that his "truth" was the only one relevant. We are not, however, looking for the "truth" in his interpretations but rather seek to establish the (in)consistencies in his line of argumentation and points of view among many flashbacks and frequent digressions. It is his representation of past events that sheds light on how the loss of the Balkans was perceived and explained by a local Muslims and provides us with a yet another perspective on the history of the region.

## 2.2. Why are Raşid's Events "Strange"<sup>26</sup>?

This study by no means aims at dealing with all the aspects of Raşid's work. The three-volume manuscript represents in itself an extensive material that could be the object of a much more comprehensive study than this provides. Despite the fact that he did not divide his work into strictly separate topical units, it might be said that there are four main subject matters of interest to Raşid. One of them would be his perception of what is known as the "Eastern Question" with an emphasis on Russian interference in the Balkans, especially with regard to the Serbian question. Furthermore, Raşid devotes a significant portion of the second volume to the internal turmoil among the Serbian officials and dynastic struggles as one of the main features of the second half of the nineteenth century. The third topic that Raşid pays considerable attention to is the period of time which he spent in Bosnia and the policies

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<sup>26</sup> Astonishing as in "*Hayret-nümâ*".

Bosnian *paşas* implemented (mostly) regarding land tenure. The forth issue that dots his pages and most likely inspired his writing the chronicle is the troublesome coexistence of the Muslims and the Serbs in Belgrade.

Within the realm of micro-history, Raşid history's contribution is immense. While he provides unique insights into micro-politics (of his neighbourhood and the city of Belgrade), at the same time he gives his judgment on the issues in the form of questions. His discussion of the way in which the *paşas* of Belgrade handled the governance of the city is rather valuable.<sup>27</sup> As in the case of Besim *paşa* where Raşid inquires about the events that took place under his rule, he is usually interested in how satisfied both the Christian and Muslim populations were with the rule of the major Ottoman representative in the city. The fact that he often reproaches some of their actions implies that, looking at the big picture, Raşid would sometimes hold the Ottomans responsible for the developments that harmed the welfare of the Empire in general. The manner in which Raşid talks about Besim *paşa*'s conduct is rather valuable as he is giving concrete information regarding the reasons why his performance was not in accordance with the rules of good government. One of the major reasons for this was his "Janissary" way of behaving (*Yeniçeri usulce darp edüp...*)<sup>28</sup>, as that kind of conduct had a negative connotation once the order was abolished in the year of 1826. In addition, Raşid points out how Besim *paşa*, from the very beginning of his reign, did not fulfil the requirements and satisfy the needs of the local population. His decision to abandon the pattern in which his predecessors ruled was not met with enthusiasm by most groups of the society in Belgrade. Such negative conduct of the Belgrade *paşa* accounts for one of the major reasons why Raşid argues Ottoman power recedes from the region.

<sup>27</sup> *Hayretnümâ.*, vol. 2., p. 37. *Şimdi gelelim yine sadede müşârün-ileyh Besim Paşa muhâfızlığı esnâsında ne vechile muâmelde bulundu ve ahâli-yi Islâm ve Sirblu ve memurin-i sâire kendüsünden hoşnûd oldularmi ve anın zamânında dahi bir nev' i vukûât oldu mu bunun dahi tafsîlen beyân olunması hâsseten niyâz ederim.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

The value of Raşid's chronicle is in that it is a history of this important Ottoman frontier according to his own views and parameters for good and bad, for wrong and right. He chooses to talk about events that strike him most and come as amazement or surprise. This amazement and surprise is naturally related to the decline of Ottoman supremacy in the Balkans and all the agents (domestic and foreign) that brought about new "rules" for the Muslim population to abide by. Raşid reconstructs and comments upon almost the entire nineteenth century on the strength of the sentiments evoked by these new circumstances that eventually brought about the loss of the Balkans. His representation of those events, however biased, is an ideal source to examine the history of Ottoman mentalities in this turbulent period.

One of the illustrations of that period as well as Raşid's understanding of the ongoing changes is his interpretation of the "war without smoke" that the Serbs were waging against the Muslim 's in Belgrade.<sup>29</sup> As he points out, Serbian politics was getting unbearable and even children in cradles could understand that the Serbs with their misdeeds, as in Karadjordje's time, especially Miloš and his son Mihailo Obrenović would attempt to seize Belgrade in revenge. In order for a Muslim to avoid being oppressed or killed, as Raşid explains, it was possible to either get permission to migrate somewhere else in the Ottoman Empire or to obtain a Ferman (Imperial order) whereby the Serbs' entrance to the Fortress

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<sup>29</sup> *Fakat Sırbunun politika ve dumansız harbine tahammül edilemez ve gidişleri günden güne fenalaşmakda ve böyle ablûkanın nihâyeti Kara Yorke zemânında olduğu gibi tiz vakitde dahi olacağı anlaşılmakda ve Sırbuların derkâr olan mel'aretleri ve bâ-husûs Miloş ve oğlu Mihail'in avdet kâdimeleri icâbınca be-hemel-hâl ahâli-yi İslâmdan ale'l-gafle ahziintikâm olarak Belgrâd'ı zabt eyleyecekleri izhâr-ı min-el-şems olduğunu beşikde çocuklar bile anlamış oldular. Böyle bir hâle giriftâr olmadan işe ruhsat verilüp memâlik-i şâhâneye hicret edilmesi veyahud imtiyâz ferman-ı âlisi mucibince Sırbunun istihkâm derununda ve gerek İslâm mahalleletiyile Çarşularında medhalleri men' olunması ve bu bâbda şâyed Sırbu bir diyecekleri olur ise derûn-ı istihkâm da bulunan Sırb hâne ve emlâk ve emvâl ve eşya ve evlâd ü iyâllerini kendü malları gibice muhâfaza ve hiç bir fenalık vukû'â gelmiyeceğine ve zâten ekser ahâli-yi İslâm-ı müstahfazın silkide bulunduğundan muhâfazasına leyl ü nehâr devâm edeceklerini taahhüdlerini şâmil memleketce sened vereceklerini beyân ve cevâb-ı kat'i eylediler.*

and the quarts where the Muslims lived would be forbidden. If the Serbs complained in this regard, Raşid continues, they would be assured that all their property would stay unharmed, as the Muslim warden would guarantee day and night protection.

This and similar attempts to acquire more authority were a reflection of the dual administration present in Belgrade (from the year of 1817 onwards), with constant insecurities on the both sides. Raşid on many occasions comments on the Serbian efforts to endanger Ottoman power within the city, emphasizing how around the *kale* (Fortress) and even in its vicinity, there were no Muslim houses (*hane*), shops (*dükkân*), or coffee houses (*kahvehane*) left. Such developments are certainly enough for Raşid to consider them strange, as centuries prior these occurrences were the time of unquestionable Ottoman supremacy. Not only everyday quarrels within the city, but also the overall macro politics that included constant European interference into internal disputes between the Muslim and Christian communities, usually on the part of the latter, were causes of Raşid's amazement. The Great Powers, in Raşid's eyes, were significantly assisting the Christians (Serbs) to reach their dream of getting full independence and the episodes depicting that process are common throughout Raşid's chronicle. That said, the variety of Raşid's "strange" events is usually related to the Muslim's inability to accept new rules/circumstances imposed on them.

### Chapter III

## Who is Willing to Compromise? Muslims, Serbs and the Frontier in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire

Situated on the borderland between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires, the city of Belgrade at the turn of the nineteenth century serves as an illustration of the importance that one part of Ottoman society on the borderland represented for an empire in decline. The significance of the frontier is, furthermore, strikingly evident in Raşid's work. As this chapter will show, Raşid understands the Belgrade *paşâlık* and that entire border stretching to Bosnia as a stage for struggle among many different agents. He understands the Serbian *millet's* ascendance from the middle of nineteenth century onwards as a betrayal of the Empire and ingratitude on their part. In what follows, I will discuss several events indicative of the social dynamics and transformation in this borderland milieu peculiar to the era under investigation and--most importantly—as seen through Raşid's eyes. I will seek to illustrate the manner in which certain social changes affected the Muslim population of the region and Ottoman society in general. It is important to note that even though Raşid is writing his work in the 1870's, he seems to spend a lot of time writing about the turn of the nineteenth century. What does this period mean to him aside from the existence of widespread violence and rebellion? Raşid and his Christian contemporaries in "Serbia" were all focusing on the turn of the nineteenth century and writing their version of what happened then until the final departure of the Ottomans from the Belgrade fortress in the year of 1867.

**3.1. Interpreting the Importance of the Frontier: “These people [the Ottomans] would sacrifice everything they have for the sake of the Empire, but people on the border(land) would sacrifice much more, not only their property but also their lives.”<sup>30</sup>**

When Belgradi Raşid embarked on writing his *Hayret-nümâ* in the 1870s, the last Ottoman soldier had already left the city of Belgrade. In the line from the very beginning of Raşid’s manuscript quoted above, the mention of *serhad* (the frontier) not only acts as an indicator of the this area’s importance for the Empire in terms of its geographical position but also as a symbol that plays a central role in Raşid’s narrative strategy and overall ideology of his work. How does he portray Muslim society on the frontier? What does frontier mean to him? How does he characterize the dynamics among various power players in this setting and with what goal in mind? In order to answer these questions it is instructive first to look at the Ottoman conceptions of the *serhad*.

Defining the concept of the “frontier” is not an easy task, - especially in the Ottoman context. In modern history the understanding of the “frontiers” has been dominated by two different approaches, the European and the North American notion of the frontier. While the former “normally means a political barrier between states or peoples, often militarized, sometimes envisaged as linear, sometimes as a zone,”<sup>31</sup> the latter is formulated as “not a barrier but a zone of passage and a land of opportunity, involving conflict with the natural environment rather than neighbors.”<sup>32</sup> To apply the related term *frontier* to our (Ottoman/Balkan) context calls for taking into consideration firstly the Ottoman’s *ghazi* ideology and secondly the multi-cultural and the multi-ethnic nature of the Empire. Prior to

<sup>30</sup> *Hayretnümâ*, Vol 1., p. 2., *Al-i ‘Osmân’a fedâ eyler bu ‘âlem vârunı \* Serhad ehli fazla eyler mâlını hem cânını.*” .

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Power. “Frontiers: Terms, Concepts, and the Historians of Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” in D. Power and N. Standen (eds.), *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 1-12., p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

the 1600s peace negotiations involving the Ottomans considered only the possession of individual fortresses as crucial for establishing the *serhad*, rather than a line to be drawn on a map.<sup>33</sup> From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, it was exactly the Belgrade fortress situated at the confluence of the Danube and Sava Rivers and strategically well-positioned, that was not only the center of the Belgrade *paşalık*, but also stage of struggle for authority between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. The proximity of Belgrade to the Habsburg Empire that occupied it for thirty years after the war of 1715-18 and to one other crucial Ottoman fortress, namely Vidin and its surrounding *sancak*, points to the importance of Raşid's place of residence and his work for a unique insight on the chaotic events of the era.

What did a frontier mean to the Ottomans whose society in itself was divided along many boundaries from within (Muslim-non Muslim, '*askerî* [privileged military, bureaucratic, and religious cadres]- *re'âyâ* [tax-paying subjects], etc.)? What did it imply "to control" the frontier for the Ottomans themselves: is the borderland in service of expansion only? How did an Ottoman Muslim resident of a borderland society react to the developments in the nineteenth century that not only excluded any possibility of expansion but also made the ability to defend the frontier increasingly difficult? To that point, Raşid elaborates on how two *çete* (irregular bands) from this side of the border were sent to Bosnia in order to provoke disturbance.s Those were bandits capable of inciting the rebellion as significant as that of Karadjordje, Raşid asserts.<sup>34</sup> When the Bosnians found out that around two hundred *hayduks*

<sup>33</sup> Tolga Esmer, Ch. II "Eighteenth-Century Rumeli Realities and the New Frontier as the Context for Kara Feyzi's Theater of War" in his "A Culture of Rebellion: Networks of Violence and Competing Discourses of Justice in the Ottoman Empire, 1790-1808" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2009): pp. 33-75., p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> *Hayretnümâ*., p. 106. *Berû taraftan dahi iki tâkim (Çete) tertîb ve bu kere dûhi Bosna reâyâlarını tuğyân ettirmek ve imtisâl etmeyenleri cebren kaldırup kendülere tabi' ettirmek ve bâlâ da tafsîlen beyân ve hikâye olunduğu vechile Kara Yörkenin tuğyâna teşebbüs eylediği usûl ve o yolda hareket edilmek üzere sevk ve bu irsâl olunan iki yüz neferden*

(bandits) crossed Drina River, they engaged in a fight with them, killed the majority of them but brought some of them to the *vali* of Bosnia. The misdeeds (*mel'anet*) of the Serbian government at the time, as Raşid hereby points out, becomes more obvious when they refuse to accept the responsibility for sending the troops to Bosnia, despite the fact that those who survived and came back to “Serbia” disclosed the government’s intention by admitting that it provided them with munitions and weapons for these assaults.<sup>35</sup> The question of why Raşid gives importance to such an event might be answered with the first lines of his *Hayretnüümâ*, where he clearly shows that this frontier anticipated the unfortunate future of the Empire.<sup>36</sup> Rasid describes Belgrade as a place “situated within the gardens of borderlands” where “it flourished like in Heavens.”<sup>37</sup> It is with “some strange people and their evil politics” who wanted to annihilate the preeminence of Islam within Belgrade’s domain that the situation was altered. Raşid, therefore, throughout his chronicle indirectly points out to Serbia’s increasing authority emanating from the city of Belgrade and spreading within the *paşalık* of Belgrade all the way across the border, expressing the fear of Christians’ constant urge to rebel.

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*ziyâdece haydûd makûlesi nehr-i Drina öte tarafa geçirdiğimiz Boşnaklar haber alup ve serîan üzerlerine varup ekserîsini katl edup ve bir kaçını katl etmeyerek kayd ü bend ile Bosna Vâlisine irsâl ve bir kaç kimesne dâhi ber-takrîb güç hal ile Sirbistana firâren avdet ettiklerinde hükümet-i Sirbiyye bu habâsetini dahi örtmek için keenne (Bu husûsa Miloş ve Rüesâ-yi sâirenin rizâsı olmadığı ve bunlar hafîyyeten geçtiklerinden dâhi haberleri olmamış diyerek avdet eden çend nefer kesânî Bögürdelen kal'ali varoşuna celb ve orada teşhîr ve alâ melei-n-nâs(sic) tahrikatına gidenler böyle terbiye olunuyor ve keşke bunları dâhi Boşnaklar katl etmiş olsa idi daha evlâ olurdu deyu söylediklerinde darb olunan merkûmun âğâz edup (Bizi karşıya irsâl eden ve akçe ve mühimmât ve esliha veren sizler iken şimdi böyle teşhîr ve darb olunmaklığınız ne hamiyettir ve neden îcâb idiyor) dediklerinde bu vechile Emâretin mel'anatlerini alenen meydana verdiklerinde (Kendü cünhalarını Sirb Milleti hükümetine 'atf ve ihsân dahi ediyorlar) diyerek bi çâreleri prangabend etmiş idi.*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1., p.2., *Hadâyık-ı serhaddât-ı hâkâniyyeden bulunan Belgrad behîst-i âbâdda neşv ü nemâ bulmuş ve takallübât-ı evrâk rûzgâr ve tebeddül-i fusûl ahvâl ve kâr ile târî olan a'gyâr hâr ü hâsâk politika-ı 'asriyye revnak-ı tırâz gülîstân gülgonça-ı ahâlî-yi İslâmî ilerüde bütün bütün istilâ ve bâd-ı sarsar-ı hazân ta'addiyâtıyla izmihlâl ü imhâ edeceğine bûlbûl iz'ân olan 'Akil Bey...*

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.2.



From the very beginnings of the Empire, the Balkans for the Ottomans meant not only a strategically ideal position for future expansion, but also rich, fertile soils and endless fields for agricultural and pastoral pursuits linked with well-connected trade routes. It was not until the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) that the major part of “Europe in Turkey” was by and large “liberated” from the Ottomans. Nonetheless, I chose to talk about the period encompassed by Raşid’s work (i.e. c. 1802-1861) as the beginning of the loss of the Balkans. Even though Serbia’s independence was officially recognized only in the year of 1878, the rule of the Ottomans had been significantly challenged in this area already from the well-known first Serbian insurrection of 1804 when the Great Powers, primarily Russia, began to support Serbian autonomy against their Ottoman overlords. In this regard, Raşid’s vantage point puts him in the position of an eyewitness, thereby making his chronicle a good tool for our inspection of the nature of the provincial Muslim mindset.

We might understand Rasid’s disquiet about these developments as twofold: it materializes first as a struggle for authority over the city of Belgrade between the Serbs and Muslims, and then goes on to manifest itself throughout the entire region through the interference of foreign agents present in the area. Let us be reminded that, once the foreign consulates were opened in Belgrade (1835), Muslims were not only losing authority to the Serbs but also had to accept the fact that many issues on the local level had to be resolved with those consulates’ meddling. To this point, it is interesting to notice that one more author of the period, namely Nikola Hristić (a high Serbian police official), discusses in his *Memoirs* how the position of the Serbs in Belgrade was obstructed by those foreign elements operating within the city. He, moreover, writes about their interference into *esnâf* activities by disobeying the rules which Serbian authorities had previously established.<sup>38</sup> Raşid, for his

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<sup>38</sup> Hristić, p. 180.

own part, very often recognizes the presence of the foreign consulates as unavoidable.<sup>39</sup> The presence of these foreigners, therefore, disrupted the local order and was an element that had to be acknowledged by both sides, Muslim as well as Serbian.

The episodes in Raşid's narrative where he is looking beyond the Belgrade *paşalık* to tell the story of the nineteenth-century Ottoman/Balkan borderland are dense and intertwined. He frequently makes a reference to Bosnia thereby trying to depict the overall complexity of the locale, the networks of power and violence and the (key) players whose roles he finds important in general developments regarding this Ottoman frontier. For instance, the following is an example of Raşid's assessments of the current politics, where he clearly puts forward the Serbian officials' attempt to spread the violence on the Bosnian side of the frontier.<sup>40</sup> Upon the Serbs' attack against the Bosnian Ömer *paşa*, some of the prominent Serbian locals were killed. The matter resolves when the Ottoman *paşa*'s collecting the weapons and arms from the non-Muslims in order to prevent any further bloodshed. As a result, Raşid asserts, the Serbs started to show more respect towards the Bosnian *paşa*, but according to him, if the weapons had not been collected, the Bosnian territory would have dropped into a bad condition. In this, as well as in the many other cases, Raşid vividly depicts the social dynamics along the frontier.

Raşid thoroughly writes about the beginning of the nineteenth century, tracing the whole affair about the beginning of the first Serbian insurrection. Those who are regarded as the "key players" in Serbian historiography are the same people Raşid holds as most responsible

<sup>39</sup> *Hayret-nümâ.*, Vol. 2. p. 34. ... *ve her tarafta konsoloslar bulunup peyderpey malûmât alup hakikâte kesb-ü vukûfiyet etmektedirler.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18. *Gelelim Sırb rûesâlarına Bosna kıt'asında fesâd zuhûr ve Ömer Paşa'nın üzerine kalkıştıklarından bu fesâd da medhalî bulunan hânedan ve mu'teberan ve yerlû add olunan paşaları nef' ve ba'zıları katl edildiğinden memnûn olûb revâç politikaları merkezini bulacağı me'mûllarında iken bu vak'anın akâbinde Bosna'da sâkin bulunun tebaa gayr-ı Müslimanın kâffe-i eslihaalarını bir günde toplayub ahz edince derakab politikalarını değıştirip muhâfiz-ı müşâünileyh dahâ bir kat hürmet ve riâyet etmeye mubâşeret eylediler. Bu esliha toplanmamış olsaydı Bosna kıt'ası fena hâle duçâr olurdu.*

for the hardship of the Muslims' in the region. Miloš Obrenović and Karadjordje are, in Rašid's narrative, the primary Serbian suspects for all the misdeeds occurring in the area. Yet again, disillusionment and resentment also surface in his discussions of fellow Muslims who betray the Muslim community by cooperating and or not fighting with the Serbs efficiently (such as the case of the abovementioned Besim *paşa*. The overall well-being of the Empire in such an important period, for instance, was not exactly a primary concern of those who exerted power as its representatives. As a result, Rašid's voice is critical not only of the Serbian "enemy" but of the Ottoman government as well.

Until the late eighteenth century, the Empire made it a priority to have the Christians within its domain oblige to its rules and remain loyal. After this period, however, the Muslims found themselves in a situation which called for defending the frontier from their own subjects. With the privileges that Serbs started to acquire mostly because of Russia's sponsorship, the Ottomans now had to learn to obey by acknowledging the rights being granted to the Serbs. Perhaps it is this new state of affairs what gave Rašid the impetus to write his *Hayret-nümâ*. James C. Scott, in his work on everyday forms of resistance, talks about the ability to resist as "also a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labelled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history."<sup>41</sup> As seen in presented episodes, Rašid's interpretation of the local history is no less than an attempt to "identify causes" which brought about the changes that strongly influenced the lives of his fellow Muslims in the *paşalık* of Belgrade. At the same time, he demonstrates a consistent effort to "assess the blame" and label the people responsible for wrong-doing.

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<sup>41</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1985), xvi-xvii.

### 3.2. Ottoman Subjects in the Age of Reforms: The Impact of Changes on the Ottoman Frontier Milieu

One of the major subject matters to investigate in the realm of Ottoman studies has been the “level of tolerance” in terms of Muslims’ treatment of its Christian population from the very inception of the Empire until its demise. Scholars working on the Ottoman Empire have been interested to look at the scope of the freedom that could have been exercised on the Christians in the Empire, be it in private life or within the public sphere. By means of looking beyond his words of hatred, the narrative sheds light on the provincial understand of the changes happening to the Muslim population. At the same time, the perspectives of the Serbian authors some of whom we already mentioned in the Chapter one, serve as a counterpart and necessary key to understanding that very provincial mindset at the time of gradual Ottoman decline.

When the period of (*Tanzimat*) reforms started, Raşid writes about the provincial reaction of those who were keeping higher posts, namely Belgrade and Bosnian *paşas*. In that regard, he reports on the joy along the frontier, especially in Bosnia, when the reforms were first announced and widely accepted primarily among its prominent people (*mu’teberan*)<sup>42</sup>. In time, as seen in Raşid’s story however, the possibility of losing the privilege to exploit labourers and lax land-tenure arrangements as in the past, turned into reality that was not

<sup>42</sup> p. 17. *Bu esnâda Serdâr-ı Ekrem Ömer Paşa Bosna eyâletinde Tanzîmât-ı Hayyriye icrâyâ mübâşeret ve ilân eyledikde Bosna ahâlisi kemâl-ı memnûniyetle kabûl etmişler ise de ileru gelur tâkımından ve bâ-husûs fî-l âsl Bosnevi olân paşâlar ve husûsiyle Tuzlalı Mahmud Paşa ve mahdûmu Osman Bey ve dahâ ba’zı mu’teberân Tanzîmâtıtan memnûn olmayûb çünkü istedikleri gibi ahâlî ve çiftiklerini kendü umûrlarında meccânen istihdâm edemeyeceklerinden kendüülere bütün bütüne bu icrâât dokunmuş olacağından hemen kendulerini sûret-i diğesinde gösterüp el altından kal’e alınmaz derecede şûnun bûnun yani bî-çâre sâfdil olân Boşnâkların tağlît zihinlerinde bâşlanub nihâyet ulûl’emr ihtilâle bâdî ve esker tarafta kalkma etturduler.*

convenient to greedy *paşas*. As a result, they exerted influence on the Bosnian population urging them to rebel.

In a recent study on the “everyday forms of compliance” Milen V. Petrov explores how “ordinary” men and women learned to “speak *Tanzimat*”<sup>43</sup> and proves that “the inhabitants of the Danube Province—including the Bulgarians—turn out to have been much better attuned to the dominant state discourse than has been assumed by historians dismissive of *Tanzimat* ideological production altogether.”<sup>44</sup> Petrov raises the question of how the printing press and “official newspapers” served the Ottomans to spread its ideology of reform to its diverse subjects. He concludes that due to the limited literacy in the region, such a method could not have been of much use to the Empire. Interestingly enough, Raşid himself complains on many occasions about the Serbian press across the river in the Habsburg Voyvodina, by means of which they succeeded in spreading their own ideas, primarily the one Raşid named as “*İslav meselesi*” i.e., the idea of Panslavism. Apart from the fact that he elaborates on how the Serbs had always worked against the Empire and used the newspapers for the same purposes, he emphasizes how they would succeed in reopening the printing house by only changing its name soon after it had been closed.<sup>45</sup> Raşid’s anxiety seems to have been in place once we acknowledge the fact that the case of the printing press did mean a change that worked against the Ottomans. That said, it is those Serbs from the other side of

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<sup>43</sup> Milen V. Petrov., “Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864-1868”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Oct., 2004), pp. 730-759., p.733.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p.734.

<sup>45</sup> *Hayretnümâ*, Vol. 2., p.106., ...gazete-i mezbûrun yazışı Sırplunun yazışı üzerine olduğu aşıkârdır. Çünkü her zamanda Sırplılar muğayir-i rizâ-yi âliye ve gerek memâlik-i Şâhâneye dokunacak ve riâye-i Devlet-i âliyyenin temâmiyle taglît zihinlerine müeddi olacak bir şeyin yazılmasını murâd eylediklerinde kendileri neşr edegeldikleri gazetelerinde açıktan açığa mel'ânetlerini derc edemeyup heman gazete-i mezkûre vasıtasıyla neşr ve ilân eylemekte idiler. Ve bu misallı mevâd için çend defa gazete-i mezbûr protesto olunup matbaası kapatılmış isede arası çok geçmeyerek gazetenin ismini tebdîl ederek yine nesre mübâşeret eylemekte...”

the river (as the press was established in the city of Novi Sad, being Austria at the time) who eventually brought the idea of the Serbian (i.e., national) consciousness to the Serbs on “this” side. But those Serbs were not always well received among their fellow brothers in the Serbian Principality and often-unkindly called “*nemačkari*” (from the word *nemči*, i.e. Germans). Nevertheless, bridging the disparity between those two groups was the aim of the Serbian nationalist agenda.<sup>46</sup>

It could be concluded, therefore, that in local Muslims’ experience the reforms meant a gradual loss of what had been their supreme dominance in the region, rather than an attempt to preserve it. The issue of what it had brought about to both Muslim and Christian populations of the Balkans, it seems to be plausible to raise a question of how the local Muslim population was supposed to understand the equality/freedom notions granted to Christians neighbors and more importantly, its limits? If, for the reformers, the interests of the Islamic community had top priority, what were the established limits of the granted privileges that secured those interests’ remaining unharmed? In searching for a possible answer to this question, we will turn to Raşid’s illustration of one event that took place in the city of Belgrade. According to Raşid, the mid-nineteenth century “allowed” prominent Serbs to use the state treasury to organize a ball in order to receive compliments on the part of the non-Ottoman (European) elements.<sup>47</sup> Such an event, as Raşid emphasizes, had never

<sup>46</sup> Roudometof, Victor. “Invented Traditions, Symbolic Boundaries, and National Identity in Southeastern Europe: Greece and Serbia in Comparative Historical Perspective (1830-1880).”, *East European Quarterly*, XXXII, No.4 (Jan. 1999)., pp.429-468. p.444.

<sup>47</sup> *Hayretnümâ.*, Vol. 2., pp. 68-69. ...*cümle millet rüesâ-yi Sırbıyeye bir nevi iltifât almak üzere mesârif hazîne-i celîle-i maliyeden olarak bir mükemmel (balo) yani Avrupa usûli vechile bir ziyâfet tertîb olunup ve kâffe-i rüesâ-yi millet ve me'murin ve tüccârân ve düvel-i mütehabbe konsoloslariyla familyalari ve ilerü gelur rüesâ-yi Sırbıye familyalari bir gece da'vet olunup asâkir-i şâhâne ve Sırp musikalari dahî celb ve kaffe-i zâbitân-askeri ve gerek müteberân ahâli-yi Islâm elbise-i resmîye ile orada mevcûd bulunup med'uv bulunanlar kemâl-i riâyette karşılanup iltifâti fâika ibrâz olundu. Hülâsa-i kelâm hiç bir vakitte Sırbistanda öyle bir balo ziyâfeti vukû' bulmamış olduğu cümle indinde malûm idi ve bu bâbda dahî müşârün-ileyhüma şan-i devleti vikâye buyurmuş oldular. Bu ziyâfette devlet-i*

happened before, (*Sırbıstanda öyle bir balo ziyâfeti vuk'u bulmamış...*), and since Serbia was still legally a part of the Ottoman Empire it comes as no surprise that Raşid expresses dissatisfaction with that kind of privilege for his Christian neighbours. Dancing to the Polka and *kolo* (nowadays a traditional Serbian dance) in the center of what for the Ottomans represented one of the most important strategic cities/regions was certainly something that Muslims would not have so easily approved of. Finally, it seems that the Muslim population in the Balkans had been much more exposed to the “side-effects” of the reform project. Whether the reformers really had their interests in mind or not, it is these Muslims along the frontier who had probably had much more trouble to understand what was the “good” that the reforms brought to them.

The Ottoman Empire was now the “Sick Man of Europe” and as Raşid’s standpoint proves, found itself in a position of a victim. Being a victim justifies any possible malefaction to be done to the enemy. After all, the distinction between “them” and “us” was now being supported by the Empire’s subjects themselves. The non-Muslims now had reforms, Great Powers and the time on their side, and not much depended on the Muslim tolerance any more.

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*âliyye tarafdari bir kat daha kuvvet bulup politika ve öyle Avrupanın nazargâhi olan mevki-i nâzikedde bu ziyâfetin verildiği pek güzel bir tertîb olup celb kalup rüesâ-yi millet edilmişdi. Ol gece sabaha kadar usûl-u Avrupa üzere oyunlar yani familyalar ile birlikde Danz ve Polka ve Kolo ve daha buna mümâsıl isimler ile tesmiye denilen oyunlari icrâ ettiler. Hatta usûl-u Avrupaca hâne sahibi bulunan zât ibtidâ oyunların küşâdına bidâ etmek kâide-i mer'iyelerinden bulunmuş olduğuna imtisâlen bilmeceburiye ibtidâ oyunun küşâdını müşâ-ül-ileyh Kabuli Efendi Aleksandri Bey'in familyasiyla bedâ eylediğinden artık herkese nâhoş gelüp kemâl-i şevklerini artırup ve saf olunmaz derecede anlaşılıp hatta Avrupalılardan orada bulunan konsolos ve sâire şu icrâ olunan usûl ve riâyete bir diyecekleri kalmayup tahsîn etmekte diler.*

## Chapter IV

### Serbs as Christians of Ill-Omen: The Decline of the Ottoman Islam in the nineteenth century Balkans

The nineteenth-century Ottoman elite did try, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, to introduce reforms that would improve the status of the non-Muslim subjects. The reaction of the majority of the Muslim population who viewed their supposed equality with the infidels as nothing less than an insult to their true Islamic faith was sufficiently indicative of the project's lack of success. In his recent study on Islam in the Ottoman age of reforms Frederick Anscombe argues that those very reforms were, in actual fact, aimed at preserving the Islamic nature of the Ottoman Empire and, most importantly, designed to meet the needs of its Muslim element(s)<sup>48</sup>. However, judging from the reactions from all around the empire, the Muslim population had trouble perceiving these goals and for the most part found the reforms an affront to the Islamic law and faith. Raşid's account captures the feelings of a Rumeli Muslim who mourned the gradual loss of authority and the demise of Ottoman Islam's supremacy in the Belgrade *paşalık*—a process that accelerated in the second half of the nineteenth century. To that point, Raşid demonstrates the mistreatment of Muslims on the part of the newly established Serbian authorities (the so-called dual administration from the year of 1817 onwards) in terms of the violation of Muslim public as well as private life. It was from this period onwards that the Serbs required their Muslim neighbors/shopkeepers to clean the street in front of their houses/business on Saturday evenings before the Christian

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<sup>48</sup> Anscombe, Frederick F. , "Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform", Past and Present., August 2010 (Vol. 208, No. 1). pp. 159-189., p.160.



holy day in the week.<sup>49</sup> These kinds of changes were probably perceived as great slights to the Muslim population and contributed to their feeling that the world as they knew it was crumbling. In this chapter I seek to provide the reader with Raşid's illustration of such dynamics and sentiments.

#### 4.1. Islam as a “Weapon” for Defence: Raşid's Interpretation of the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

Raşid's narrative demonstrates that rather than seeking explanation for the rise of Serbia in nationalist ideology and policy, the strength of the Serbs lay in Empire's inability to establish order on the provincial level and hinder the Serbs' ability to seize authority from the Empire. In that regard, his disappointment is evident when he discusses the Belgrade *paşas'* preference for status quo: Raşid emphasizes that every one of them would declare: “Let nothing happen during my rule so that I am not resented” (“*aman benim zamânımda bir sey vukû' bulmasın ve ta'n altında kalmayayım*”).<sup>50</sup> This kind of behavior, according to Raşid, had direct impact on the lives and properties of the Muslim population, leading to the loss of authority and empowerment of the Serbs.

Let us be reminded that Raşid's narrative “reports” on the events that transpired several decades before. The events described in his *Hayretnü mâ* are the affairs that left the strongest impression on him with respect to Muslims' increasingly deleterious situation, primarily in the city of Belgrade. One of the most striking episodes that serves to illustrate the Serbs' violence against Muslims is a scene from the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> The

<sup>49</sup> Murphey., “Vignettes from Rasid's history illuminating the transformation of a Muslim metropolis of the Balkans”., p. 285.

<sup>50</sup> *Hayretnü mâ*, Vol. 2., p. 32.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1. p.43. ...*Nihâyetü'l-emr validesi bir boğça derûnunda mahlût olarak envâ'-ı şeyler getirüp/götürüp önlerine duyunca Sırplı-yı merkûme eşyâ-ı mezbûreyi yağmayaverirler ile münâza'aya düşüp hemân vâvalidesi-yi mümâileyh 'Alî Bey'i kolundan çıkıp dışarıya*

protagonists of this event were the Serbs, a certain Ali Bey and his mother.<sup>52</sup> In Raşid's telling, the Serbs came to seize this man's property under pretext that he had previously attacked them. The intervention of the Serbs was conducted in a most brutal way. When they demanded him to get out of the house, Ali Bey, a notorious *dayi* succeeded in escaping despite having his hands tied. He ran to the Danube shore and managed to get to the opposite side of the river thanks to a fisherman's boat. Once the Serbs saw his escape, they killed his mother, cutting her up into pieces (*pâre pâre eyledilersede...*). The woman accepted to be sacrificed for the well-being of her son.<sup>53</sup>

Such stories are of a great importance for our understanding of Raşid's anger and hatred towards the Serbs. What is significant, however, is that this episode from Raşid's account suggests a thorough social transformation of provincial Ottoman society. Looking beyond the perpetual combat between 1804 and 1813 (the epoch known as the First and Second Serbian Uprisings), this period was an age of radical change in the Ottoman social order in the region. Ottoman rule on the local level was now challenged. Who was to react and hinder the Christians from acting in such ways as described above? Who was to defend the honor of Islam in times when hitherto obedient Christians who were "willing" to behave as loyal subjects turned irreversibly against their masters?

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*çıkmasını işâret eyledikde o dahi oradan ber takrîb çıkıp komşu kapılarından firar eyle ellerini dahî çözerek nehr-i Tuna kenarında alına geçen bir balıkçı kayığıyla kendisini karşı tarafına atıp cânını kurtarmışdır. Merkûmun Sırplı mîr-i mümâileyhin firâr ettiğini görünce ve vâlidesi bîçâre hâtunu pâre pâre eyledilersede mîr-i mümâileyh câ-yı selâmete varıp vâlidesi oğlunun uğruna kurban olarak şehâdeti kabûl etmiş oldu (bi-hükmeti 'l-ahi)..."*

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 43. ...darb-ı şedîd ile darbe-i kıyâm ve mevcûd bulunan mâl ve eşyâsı meydâna getirmesini ibrâm ettiklerinde vâlidesi bulunan bîçâre ihtiyâra hâtûn bu hâl-i küdüret iştîmâlî görünce ne kadar eşyâsı var ise birer birer götürüp/getirüp Sırplılara vermekten halî olmamış iken bunlar hem eşyâları yağma etmek ve hem de mîr-i mümâileyh hitâb ederek (ey bey sen dahi bizleri böyle darb ede...) serzeniş ile gazv eyledikçe mîr-i mümâileyh cevâbında (siz bilirsiniz sizleri darb etmediğimi va dâ'imâ muhâfaza gözde bulunduğumu ve lâkin elinize düşmüş iken icrâ edin eğerce cenâb-ı Ahkemü'l-Hâkimîn bana verir ise bu vechile sizlerden 'ahz par ve intikâm edeceğimi ben dahi bilirim) demeden geri durmayup meğerce dârıbları bulunan Sırplı mümâileyh 'Alî Bey'in karye ve çiftçi Sırplılarından etmişler.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.44.

The Muslims on the frontier did not expect help to come from the Imperial center. Raşid elaborates on how the (religious) dignitaries in Sarajevo (*Saraybosna*) took it upon themselves to restore the honor of Islam, to bring the Muslim population (*ahâlî*) together as a response to frequent attacks of the Serbian gangs (*çete*).<sup>54</sup> According to our author, they invited people to the mosques while professing the following: “Hey, brothers, the Serbian enemies attacked our fatherland and are manifesting enmity. It is now our religious duty to engage in war against them (*Ey karındaşlar, Sırp düşmânları bizim vatanımıza tesallüm eylediler ve yağılık yolunu tuttular, şimdi harb etmek bizlere farz oldu*)”.<sup>55</sup> As this passage from Raşid’s account suggests, religious war (i.e. application of shari’a) was seen as the only means to confront the outrages of the Serbian Christian enemy and to the fact that the Ottoman state was unable or unwilling to support Muslims against Serbs. It is interesting that while he describes the Serbs’ assaults as “brigandage” without ascribing it religious connotations but only as an action conducted by bandits (*hayâdîd şeklinde*), he views reading religious law (!) from the books in front of the mosques as the answer to the assault in question. This seeming mismatch between the registers of violence and responses to them—one supposedly motivated by greed for plunder and the other by a divinely sanctioned demand for justice—is indicative of the religious and moral framework that informed an Ottoman Muslim’s worldview in which Muslims are by the law of the state and religion above any other religious group and every attack upon them, no matter for what reason, is an offense against God. Given that he wrote his *Hayret-nümâ* in the *Tanzîmât* period when most

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 45. ...şöyle ki beyân olunduğu vechile Sırpplı’nın çetelerinden ya’nî müsellahan haydîd şeklinde geçirdikleri ‘askerlerden bit tâkımları Bosna’nın ba’zı taraflarına tasallut ve tecâvuzi bulundukları şâyî’ası ‘âsî üzerine bi’l-âde-i zıkri sebkât eden Saraybosna mu’teberânî ve ‘ulemâları bi-tekrâr câmi’-i mezbûre cem’ olup ve ahâlîyi celb eylediklerinde cümlesine hatâben (*ey karındaşlar Sırp düşmânları bizim vatanımıza tesallüm eylediler ve yağılık yolunu tuttular şimdi harb etmek bizlere farz oldu ve işte Cennet kapıları açıldı*) deyu harba teşvîk ve kitâplardan bir tâkım mesâ’il-i şer’iyyenin dahi serd ve beyânına mübâşeret eylediler.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.45.

Muslims felt their religious identity was threatened, the excerpt above may be read as a reflection of Raşid's grievance against the Empire's decision to comply with the Christian's requests instead of nourishing the true faith of Islam as the only invincible "weapon" against the infidels.

#### 4.2: The "Battle" for Belgrade: Raşid's Mid-Nineteenth Century "Realities"

While the Serbs were trying to seize more (authority) for themselves, the Muslims were trying to preserve the predominance they had enjoyed for centuries. If we take into consideration that Ottoman rule actually meant the rule of Islam over the people of "inferior" religion, the gradual loss of domination within the city and the area overall signified the defeat of the faith of Islam as well.

Raşid's discussion of the post-uprising Belgrade, namely of the period from the year of 1817 until the 1860s, is somewhat less focused on violence but by no means more pro-Serbian. The end of the actual field combats between the two parties did not, however, mean the end of the "battle" for Belgrade. Raşid's focus is on the manner the city of Belgrade was governed and how the Serbs resented the Ottoman soldiers and were always "greatly desirous to provoke more and more disturbance".<sup>56</sup>

Raşid could not have remained indifferent to the first indication of the Serbs' imminent independence. The Serbs, as Raşid tries to depict, had used every opportunity to get a step closer to that goal. At one point, clearly mad and bitter, he writes that there are no words to express how damned a people the Serbs are.<sup>57</sup> The reason for his anger was a map of the future independent Serbian state that he apparently had a chance to see with his own eyes.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 45. "...Sırp milleti ise ne mel'anette olduğu cümlelerin ma'lumudur, her ne kadar vasf edilmiş olsa tarifi gayr-ı mümkündür, nesr eyledikleri haritalarda bile bir mel'anet ve rumuzat naks olunup kaffe-i Sırp milettini bir efkâra düşürmek zayi'sini icrâ eylemişlerdir."

The map depicts a tree with new, young branches growing from the trunk alongside the Serbian royal crown hanging from that tree.<sup>58</sup> The Serbian dresses, along with the *çarıkçı* (*opanci*, Serbian national footwear) were present in the picture as well. For an Ottoman whose Empire was on the verge of losing this important part of its territory, these were the examples of audacity and the offence of the Serbs to Muslim sensibilities.. Raşid, furthermore, cites one of the *paşas* of Belgrade, namely Hurşid Paşa, who already in the 1850s asserted that Serbian politics are a clear indicator of the Empire's impending end.<sup>59</sup> "In less than ten years," he pointed out, "the Muslims will be expelled from Belgrade head first. Interestingly enough, it turned out exactly that way.

Another interesting episode from the mid-nineteenth century with respect to decline of Islam is the unique case of a "contested conversion" depicted in *Hayretnüma*.<sup>60</sup> To put it in

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.45. "...Şöyle ki harita-ı mezbûrun kenarında budakları kesilmiş bir büyük ağaç kutuğu resm olunup ve altında Sırp elbiseleri ve ayaklarında Çarık ve esliha ile mükemmel donanmış cund-ı nefer Sırp ruesa ve merkûm Kara Yorgi ve Miloşun resimleri nakş olunmuş ve başları üzerinde yani kutuğun budakları altında meşveret ve tuğyân elemekle Sırp Kralliyetini ne suretle meydana çıkarmaklığı mümkün olur müzakere ve ittifâk ederek nihayet silâha mürâcaatla bu imtiyâzı kazandıklarını îmâ eyledikleri ve ol kutuğun sağ sol taraflarına bir mikdar dal budak gosterilup bunun altında atik Sırp Kralının tacı asılmış ve bu dallar bir mikdar gölge edup onlar dahi sayesinde oturup niye meşveret etmekde deyu resm-i mezkûrda göstermislerdir."

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 34. "...Bu memleketlerin ileride bekâsını görmüyorum ve bu hal ile dahâon sene gider gitmez bu ahalî -i İslami mecburen hicret ettirirler fakat şöyle bir hal ile hicret ve terk-i vatan ettirerek bir el onde bir el arkada darb-ı misali gibi...ve ol hal ile nihayeti vukû' bulacağı rûşen-i hal ve ceryan eden Sırplı'nun politikaları göstermektedir."

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 26. Şöyle ki Saraylı Şerif-zâde Fazıl Paşa'nın haremi Der-sa âdete gitmek üzere Belgrâd'a geldikte hademelerinden fî-l-asl Bosnevi bir Hristiyan kızı kendi hüsn-i rizâsiyle mukaddemâ medîne-i sadagda şeref-i Islâm da müşerref olubda haremle birlikde olduğunu Emânet-i Sirbiyye her nasilsa haber aldıklarında güyâ mersûmenin karındaşı orada bulunup, hemşiresini cebren Islâm idilmiş olduğundan iâdesini iddiâda bulunuyor diyerek mersûmenin Emâret-i Sirbiyyeye teslim edilmesi bâbinda Sirb Hariciye Müdürü bulunan merkûm Aleksa Simić resmen muhâfiz-i müşârün-ileyh Mehmed Hurşid Pasa'ya gelup ifâde-i hâl ve mersûmenin teslimini istidâsına bulundu. Bunun üzerine der-akâb mersûme huzura celb ve su âl edildikde hiç bir garaz veyahud cebr üzerine şeref-i Islâmla müşerref olmayup hemân hasbi ve muhâbbet-i derüniyesi üzere halisen muhlisen Islâmiyeti kabûl etmiş oldugunu beyân eyledi.Emâret-i Sirbiyye ise iddi âsından geri durmayup isrâr eylediler ise de teslim edilemeyece ki kendulere cevâb-i kat'i edildiyse esnâ-i râhda mersûmeyi alacaklari melhûz idi. Çünkü bâlâda beyân kilindiği ve bil-münâsebe hikâye edildiği üzere Alacahisar

a nutshell, Raşid begins the story by introducing *Saraylı Şerif-zâde Fazıl Paşa* who was travelling with his *harem* to Istanbul. When he came to Belgrade, Raşid relates, a Christian girl from Bosnia (!) decided to convert to Islam and join his harem. Soon afterwards, the Serbian government learned about the event after the girl's brother appeared and insisted that she was converted by force. Even though, according to Raşid, the girl herself claimed to have voluntarily accepted the new faith, the Serbs demanded from the Ottomans to release her. The issue gained a lot of importance for all parties involved. What is more, it might be said that this case symbolized the current state of affairs of the time: the struggle over girl was a concealed contest between Islam and Christianity, an ulterior motive for both sides to win over and prove their superiority. It is rather striking that Raşid elaborates on this affair in a very detailed manner. The very fact that he decided to include this story among the “strange” events is indicative of the importance such an occurrence could have had for a Muslim in Belgrade. All the controversy and interference of the foreign consulates ended as the girl was handed to the Serbs. She could be said to have been a symbol of Islam's decline in Belgrade. As Selim Deringil argues in his study on the conversion and apostasy in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans “constantly felt the consulates and embassies were looking over their shoulder

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*mandiralarından frenk oğulların keyfiyeti ve Bosna hâkimin cariye fikrasi ma' lum olduğundan bu vechile Sirbistan içinden gitmeleri münâsib olmayup hemân Avusturya, Devleti ülkesine geçurulup ol-tarafdan vapur sefinesiyle Der-saâdet'e götürülmüş olur isede bu mütâlaa olunan mahzûr dan sâlim olacağı mütâlaasını mebnî ol-vechile Paşa-i mümâ-ileyhin haremi ve mersûme kız mezkûr Zemun'e geçuruldu Sirb Hükümet tarafından haber alinup ol-taraf olan tarafdârlarına haber eylediklerinden her nasilsa devlet-i müşârünileyhin Zemun-i hükümetinde bulunan dahî muvâfakat etmesiyle polisleri ma'rifetiyle mersûme kızı Vapura girecekleri vakit cebren ahz ü girit ve sürüyerek mersûme kızın feryâd ü figân âsümana çıkarup alup cezal (sic) konağına ve oradan Vargdin kasabasına götürdüler. Her ne hal ise bir şeyden vukû' buldu ve devlet-i müşârün-ileyhanın ülkesinde dahi böyle muğayyir hareket ve şurût u uhûdun hilâfî olarak bu vechile cebren kızın alındığı husûsları Belgrâd'da mukîm düvel-i mütenabbe konsoloslarına devlet-i müşârün-ileyhin hükümet ve me'murları muhâfiz-i müşârün-ileyh tarafından bâ-takrir-i resmi protesto olunmuş ise de hiç bir şey'e müfîd olmayup bî-çâre kız gitdi gider hâlâ gider. Sırp misali bunun hakkında dahi vuku'buldu ve keyfiyet ber-tafisîl Bâb-i âliye dahi arz ve inhâ edildiyse de cevâbına bile rağbet edilmedi bu da böyle vâki' oldu.*

in matters relating to conversion.”<sup>61</sup> As previous chapters of this study have shown, the consulates in the *paşalık* of Belgrade were involved in many local issues taking place between the Ottomans and their Christian neighbours.

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<sup>61</sup> Selim Deringil., "There Is No Compulsion in Religion": On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire: 1839-1856., *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Jul., 2000), pp. 547-575., p.559.

## Conclusion

It is striking to realize how a historical account on one city and a region emerges as a reflection of the inner world of its writer. His depiction of nineteenth-century Belgrade is not a mere account of the developments that took place in this province, but a worldview that is neither subtle nor impartial.

In assessing the contribution of his expressed feelings of disillusionment and resentment in our understanding of the Balkan history, it seems important to establish how much of what we found in his *Hayretnümâ* compensates for what this historical writing lacks. In doing so, we become aware of the significance of Raşid's illustrations of the local social transformation. That transformation as seen with reforms in Bosnia, the printing press in Novi Sad (just along the frontier) and the case of "contested conversion" of one girl yielded to, on the one hand Christians' higher level of the "feeling of freedom" and on the other, to the aggravating situation of the neighbouring Muslims. The Muslims were now encountering rising local Christian power and had to be ready to comply with the newly established "rules." In that regard, Raşid's rhetoric of disillusionment and resentment serves as a very important indicator of the psychological conditions of an ordinary Belgrade Muslim.

What most of national historiographies in the Balkans have generally been arguing is the discourse on the ever-lasting antagonism between the "Turks" and the Christians throughout the entire period of Ottomans' presence in the region. In Serbian/non-Ottoman histories, the times that Raşid writes about in the nineteenth century have always been labelled as a period praised as the "liberation from the Turkish yoke." Raşid's account, however, sheds some light on the inside story of that revolutionary era. With Raşid's



narrative we are instructed to look beyond the “black and white” narratives of the period and acknowledge the existence of much collaboration between the Christians and the Muslims on the local level for the sake of personal, very often, economic interest. Special attention should be directed to his criticism of the local Ottoman authorities who either avoided facing the problems that the “new age” for the Ottomans brought about with regard to the Christian growing strength or decided on accepting the bribe and help “the enemy.” His feelings of resentment, therefore, are not initiated only by the Serbs’ action but anyone who could possible harm the well-being of the Empire.

That being said, in one of such episodes, Raşid talks about how some Ottoman soldiers in their ships, while trying to reach the stock of foodstuff stored at the mill, were hindered from further action by Serbian gendarme because it was Sunday, a holy Christian day when no work is allowed.<sup>62</sup> It is not likely, therefore, that the Muslim neighbours would have enjoyed seeing/experiencing such an event for it was firstly, diametrically opposed from the custom deeply rooted in their society and secondly, because it was an indicator of their Christian neighbour’s gradual ascendancy. The “hardship” which Muslims of the nineteenth century Balkans experienced in the provincial domain might be seen as a response to the Ottoman Empire’s “tolerance” exhibited over long centuries of coexistence. In other words, in order to adjust to the newly implemented social changes, it was the Muslims in this province who now had to endure the redefinition of tolerance, in the form of limitations on their privileges imposed by their enemy neighbours.

His depiction of nineteenth-century Belgrade and Serbia is a unique narrative written by a disappointed Ottoman Muslim who witnessed the very beginning of the de-Ottomanization of Rumelia, providing a very different perspective on contemporary events

<sup>62</sup> p.105. *Her nice ise bu esnâda asâkir-i nizâmiyye-i Şâhâne anbarından sefîne ile değirmenlere zahîre giderken Sırp zabtiyeleri tarafından men’ edilüp (Bugün pazardır ve pazar gününde iş işlenmesi memnûâtandır) deyü sefîne-yi mezkûre gerüye çevirilmişti...*

from that of elite sources such as imperial chronicles or official archival documents. Certain episodes from Raşid's chronicle, for instance, show that those who were generally considered disobedient outlaws by official historians such as Ahmed Cevdet paşa, in Raşid's eyes were oftentimes regarded as protectors of the Muslim population threatened by the rising local Christian power. My thesis argued for and pointed to the importance of finding, and analyzing other alternative voices like his, silenced by the ubiquitous narratives about Christian uprisings and nascent nationalism in the Balkans in the Age of Revolutions.

In addition to this Ottoman author, many Serbian accounts, from those authored by prominent Vuk Karadžić and Prota Mateja Nenadović to little known and explored authors such as Maksim Evgenović and Nićifor Ninković (both writing their autobiographies in the 19th century, the latter being Miloš Obrenović's barber) are waiting to be reread and analyzed with a fresh set of questions in mind.

It is exactly these kind of narratives that will reveal how the ordinary people understood and perceived nineteenth century Ottoman realities. Raşid offers us his perspective, in which the Muslim populations' life in Belgrade was constantly endangered by the Serbian authorities in the city of Belgrade. They did everything, in his words, to reach their aim, to harm and frighten Islamic people, and make them leave the city on their own.<sup>63</sup>

The "strange" events that were taking place on a daily level within the city of Belgrade serve therefore as a reflection of the overall state of affairs in the Ottoman realm. Raşid's constant complaints over the general living conditions of the Muslims in Belgrade are illustrative of the macro politics that eventually brought about the final demise of the Empire.

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<sup>63</sup> p.132. *her suretle ahâli-yi İslâma gayrı gelecek ve tahammül edemiyecekleri sıralarında bulunmak ve gece gündüz İslâm mahallelri arasında dörtyol çarşusunda beş dört candar gezüp türlü erâcîf ve dehşet verecek kelâmlar söylenmek ve cüz'i bahane ile İslâmları tutup, polislerine götürmek fakat vaktine kadar fesâd uyandırmak derecesine varılmaması ve bundan murâdları evvel emirde ahâli havfa tâbi' edilmek ve şâyet kendüleri tahammül edemeyüpde Belgrâddan hicerete mecbûr edilince kadar işin ilerüsüne gidilmesi babında mahsûsen ta'limâti hafîyye verdi.*

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